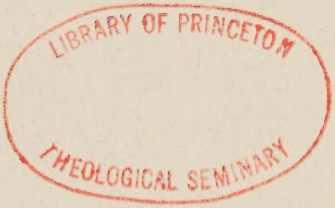

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Reflections upon the books
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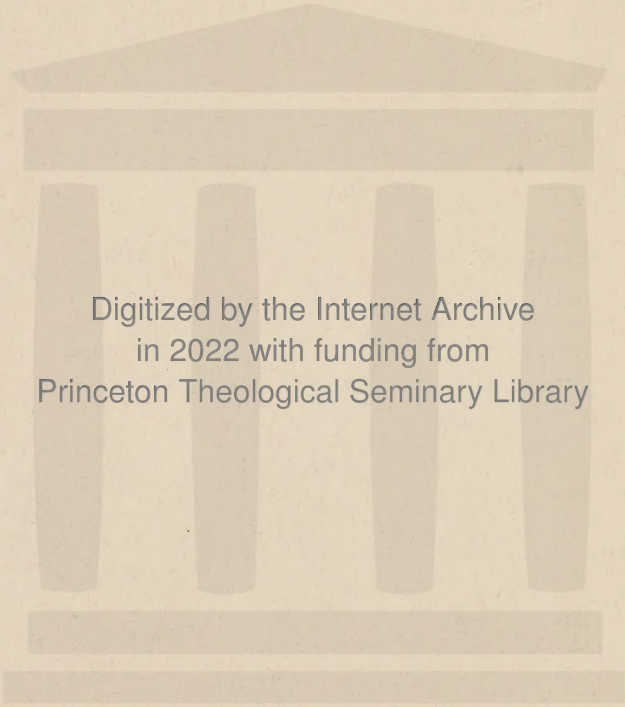

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REFLECTIONS

UPON THE

BOOKS

OF THE

HOLY SCRIPTURE,

TO

ESTABLISH THE TRUTH

OF THE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

IN FOUR PARTS.

BY PETER ALLIX, D. D.

A NEW EDITION,

From the corrected Copy of the Bishop of Landaff.

To which is prefixed,

A LIFE OF THE AUTHOR.

LONDON:

Printed by R. Edwards, Crane Court, Fleet Street,

FOR MAXWELL AND WILSON, WILLIAMS AND SMITH, BYFIELD AND SON, AND W. SUTTABY.

1809.

TO THE

KING.*

GREAT SIR,

THE gracious acceptance which your Majesty was pleased to allow the first volume of my Reflections upon the Holy Scriptures to establish the Truth of the Christian Religion, encouraged and almost necessitated me to the further presumption of laying these two volumes† at this time at your Majesty's feet. Your Majesty did me the honour to say, *That you were pleased to see Divines apply themselves to the clearing of subjects so important.* And after this judgment given by so great a Prince, which is so evident a demonstration of your zeal for the fundamental truths of the Christian Religion, it had been unpardonable in me not to have gone on with the

* JAMES the SECOND.

† As this work was originally printed in two volumes, it may be necessary to inform the reader that in the present edition, the whole is comprised in one volume without any abridgment.

work; and I had reason then to consecrate it wholly to your Majesty, who I was assured would approve of my intentions, and for that reason would pardon the imperfections of the performance. As your Majesty continues still to give such illustrious instances of your clemency and royal Protection to those of our nation, so, I confess, Sir, I thought myself under an obligation to lay hold upon this opportunity of publishing what all those who find so sure a protection in your Majesty's dominions, feel and think as much as myself upon these new testimonies of your royal bounty: when your Majesty had taken us into your particular care, and had granted us several privileges, and so made us sharers in all the advantages, which those who live under your government enjoy, your Majesty did yet something more, and inspired all your subjects with the same compassion towards us with which your royal breast was already touched. You saw our miseries, and resolved to give us ease, and this generous design was executed, and your royal clemency diffused in the hearts of all your subjects. The whole world, Sir, which has received upon all its coasts some remainders of our shipwreck, is filled with admiration of the unexampled effects of your Majesty's clemency. There is no place so barbarous, whither the renown of that mercy

which has been so gloriously extended towards us, has not been carried: and the remembrance will be ever dear to the remotest ages of posterity. We must, Sir, be wholly insensible if we had not all of us the highest sense of so great a bounty; and we should justly appear to the whole world to be unworthy of this your Majesty's paternal care, if notwithstanding that low condition to which we are now reduced, we should not prostrate ourselves before your august throne with the humblest demonstrations of thankfulness. When God showers down the greatest blessings upon mankind, he requires this just tribute, which is also their greatest honour, by opening to them an access unto the throne of glory. And this sacred pattern we crave leave to follow, when we solemnly pay the like tribute to your Majesty, who can receive nothing from us again, that can answer the greatness, or the number of those favours which have so very much exceeded all our desires. I could wish, Sir, that this work which I now present to your Majesty, might be so happy as to pass to posterity with his character of our acknowledgment, and that it might stand as a faithful record for ever, to perpetuate the memory of that lively sense of your bounty, which is imprinted on all our hearts: if this could be

hoped for, it must be wholly owing to your Majesty's glorious name, which latest ages will receive with reverence. But, Sir, though I dare not hope that these Reflections can obtain that honour, yet our age at least may see, that they bear these public marks of gratitude for all your Majesty's royal favours. This, Sir, is my sole aim in the dedication of this work to your Majesty; and may your sacred Majesty be pleased to approve of these poor testimonies of our thankfulness in general, and to look upon them as instances of mine in particular, and of that profound respect, with which

I am, Sir,

Your Majesty's most dutiful

and obedient Subject and Servant,

PETER ALLIX.

London, May 7, 1688.

PREFACE

ONE may divide men into two general classes. Some are without any knowledge of a Deity, or sense of Religion: travellers tell us, that in the West-Indies, the eastern parts of *Tartary*, and some places of *Africa*, such people are to be found. I know this is a fact which is disputed by others; and Fabricius, a divine of the Palatinate, pretends that he has solidly confuted it. If this fact should be thought doubtful, yet it is known at least, that some persons may be found here and there in the world, who look upon the existence of a Deity as upon a fable, and who ridicule all acts of religious worship whatsoever: but one may also say, that if he compare these with the rest of the world, they make the least and worst part of mankind, though many of them affect to live morally well.

All the rest of the world make profession that they own a God; that is to say, a most perfect, eternal, and independent Being; that he governs all things by his providence; that there is a difference between good and evil; that man doth well or ill in those actions which depend on his liberty: from whence they equally conclude, that man was designed for the duties of the religion, that society without it would be pure robbery; and that, as it is hard to conceive that men should be wholly destroyed by death, so it is directly contrary to the sentiments of conscience

to deny all rewards for virtue, or punishment for vice, after this life.

All the diversities of religion amongst men are reducible to two kinds.

The first is, of those who suppose that there is more than one God; and this is the belief of all Pagans in general.

The second is, of those that acknowledge one only God; such are the Jews, Christians, and Mahometans.

Now, as for the cure of different diseases several remedies are made use of, so it is visible, that to deliver men of their various prejudices, we must take very different methods.

The ignorance of those barbarous people in the *Indies*, *Tartary*, and *Africa*, must be removed, by teaching them the first principles, and making them apply the little sense they have left them of good and evil, right and wrong, to the fundamental maxims of religion.

Atheists must be convinced by reflections upon those principles which they admit, by shewing that the truths which they reject are the natural consequences of those principles, which they dare not dispute.

To convince the Heathen, who suppose many gods, we must examine their principles, and confute them; which is the easiest thing in the world; the wisest men having formerly acknowledged, as they also own to this very day, that there is but one God.

And indeed it seems, that the greatest part of philosophers did own a plurality of gods, only in compliance with the opinions of the people, which it was dangerous to contradict.

And as for the Jews, forasmuch as they agree with the Christians and Mahometans about the unity of God, we are only to prove to them the truth of that which is the very essence of the Christian Religion, in opposition to their prejudices: one may prove this against the Jews without any trouble, because they

are agreed in most of those principles which the Christian Religion supposes. So likewise it is easily established against the Mahometans, who grant the truth of the Christian Religion in general, but pretend that it ought to give place to Mahometanism, as the Law ought to give place to the Gospel, preached by Jesus Christ.

My design is not to prosecute every one of these ways in particular. There are books enough in the world which solidly prove the necessity of Religion against all sorts of Atheists, as well those who are so through ignorance, as those who profess themselves such from love to libertinism, and to pass for men of a mighty reach.

There are also several famous authors who have made it evident, that reason alone is sufficient to overthrow all Pagan religions whatsoever.

I am resolved to follow a more compendious and sure method, that is to demonstrate the truth of the Christian Religion, considered by itself.

In short, it is impossible (considering the opposition there is between the Christian Religion and all the other religions in the world) but that, if the Christian Religion should be the true, all others must be false in those articles wherein they essentially differ from it.

And on the other hand, one cannot explain those arguments which clearly evince the truth of Christianity, without convicting all other religions of falsehood, because they are destitute of those proofs which are peculiar to the Christian Religion.

I know very well that there are several ways which lead to the end which I propose. Men that think much, wish that a perfect conformity of the Christian Religion with the conscience of man might be demonstrated, from reflections on the heart of man, and the dictates of it, which to them would be a convincing and demonstrative proof.

Others apply themselves to a speculative examination of the doctrines and proofs of the Christian Re-

ligion, to shew their conformity with the notions of reason. I will not deny but that both these employ themselves usually in this sort of study, and that truth finds a considerable support from their meditations.

But how useful soever they may be, I have rather chosen to follow another course, as thinking it of more advantage, solidly to establish the facts which the Christian religion proposeth; which appears to me to be more proper to persuade all sorts of readers, and better levelled to the ordinary capacity of those who newly enter upon the examination of this truth.

And as the necessity of revelation is generally owned by heathens, and by all other nations of the world, I thought it a thing altogether unnecessary to enter upon the examination of several abstracted questions, such as these: whether there be any natural knowledge of God, whether men are naturally inclined to be religious, and the like. When I shall have firmly proved, that God revealed himself, that he prescribed a service to the first men, who left the rules of it to all their posterity, from whence all the religion that ever was, or is yet in the heathen world, was derived, I shall have prevented many very unprofitable disputes, and which can only perplex the mind by their obscurity.

I have therefore confined myself to certain considerations, which do so establish the truth of the books of the Old and New Testament, as by their union they firmly prove the truth of the Christian Religion.

I hope that it will not be thought needful for me to demonstrate, that the Mahometan Religion ought not to abolish the Christian, as the Christians pretend that the Christian Religion abrogated the ceremonial part of the Jewish worship.

As soon as an understanding Reader shall make some reflections upon the nature of the arguments which demonstrate the truth of the Christian Religion, he may easily perceive that God never framed the model of that religion which the Mahometans would obtrude upon us.

MEMOIRS

OF

THE AUTHOR.

DR. PETER ALLIX, a very learned and eminent Divine of the Church of England, though a native of the kingdom of France, was well known in the republic of letters by his numerous and his excellent writings. He was born some time in the year 1641, at Alencon, and having received a liberal education, which highly improved his great natural parts, he became Minister of the Reformed Church at Rouen, where, before he was thirty-five, he distinguished himself by publishing some very learned and curious pieces, by which he acquired a great reputation. It was owing to this that he was called from Rouen to Charenton, which was the principal church of the Reformed in France; the village in which it stood lying little more than a league from Paris, at the confluence of the rivers Seine and Marne, and whither the most considerable persons in France, of the Protestant religion, constantly resorted. We are, therefore, to consider this removal of our author, as the highest testimony of respect that could be paid him by those of his communion, in the circumstances in which they then were. As he was now in the zenith of preferment, and saw himself in a condition of doing great service to the Church, he applied himself to the task with all ima-

ginable zeal, and preached several most excellent sermons in defence of the Faith, against the artful attempts of the Bishop of Meaux, who was then labouring to overturn the Reformed Religion, by seeming concessions to its professors. Some of these sermons were afterwards printed in Holland, and met with deserved commendations from the famous Bayle, who testified a very high esteem for the learning and abilities of their author.

Upon the revocation of the edict of Nantes, Mr. Allix found himself obliged to quit France, as well as the work of the ministry in that kingdom, and had prepared a most moving and pathetical discourse, which he intended to have delivered as his farewel to his congregation; which however he was obliged to omit, though the sermon was afterwards printed, and deservedly admired. This edict was revoked, and the Reformed Religion banished France in 1685, on which our author resolved to follow the advice of his friends, and retire into England, which accordingly he did, either in that or the following year. He met here with a most favourable reception, on account of his extensive learning, and more especially his singular knowledge in ecclesiastical history, for which he was particularly esteemed. On his first arrival, he applied very closely to learning our language, which he attained to a surprising degree of perfection, as appeared by a book he published in defence of the Christian religion, and which he dedicated to King James II. in very respectful terms, acknowledging at the same time, not only his personal obligations to that Prince, but also his kindness and charity to the distressed refugees in general,

which is a very singular and remarkable piece of history. The title of this book was, Reflections upon the Books of the Holy Scriptures, &c. London, 1686. He was very soon complimented here with the degree of Doctor in Divinity, and in 1690, he had the treasurership of the Church of Salisbury given him; but I do not find that he was ever Canon of Windsor, as is asserted in some foreign memoirs. It was proposed that he should have published here an authentic History of the Councils, for which laborious and important work unquestionably there never was any man better qualified; but by some accidents intervening, and for want of encouragement, this great and useful undertaking miscarried. He wrote and published, however, several Treatises relating to Ecclesiastical history, equally learned and entertaining, which were wonderfully well-timed, and very useful to the Protestant cause, which was then attacked by the arts of Romish Priests, as well as by the arms of Popish Princes. These pieces were remarkably well received, and Dr. Allix became in as great credit here, as ever he had been in France, for his ingenious and solid defences of the Reformed Religion, from reason and authority, from the practice of early ages, as well as the precepts of the Gospel. In the year 1699, he wrote a very learned book in defence of the Trinity, which had very considerable effects, and has been always looked upon as a piece of great value in respect to Hebrew literature. He wrote, besides the works already mentioned, several other learned and ingenious Treatises on curious and important subjects, so that he was for upwards of thirty years an active as well as illus-

trious member of the Republic of Letters, and a very able as well as affectionate defender of the established Church.

Some of these pieces exposed him to very severe censures, and amongst the rest from Mr. Bayle, who had formerly complimented him so highly; but considering the subject, and the impossibility of writing about it with certainty, our author's mistakes ought not to have drawn upon him any severe usage, or contemptuous language. One would have imagined that these curious and laborious works would at least have done honour to the orthodoxy of their author, and have secured him from the opprobrious imputation of Heresy; but the fact is quite otherwise; for a vehement English writer* charges him with Tritheism, and a collection of lives published abroad,† leaves his memory under the reproach of Socinianism, than which, without question, there never was a charge more groundless and incredible. Our learned author, however, continued steady and fixed to his principles, and was so well known to be a zealous defender of the doctrine of the Church of England on that subject, that the famous Mr. Whiston thought proper to consult him, when he first proposed writing in support of his own opinions, as appears by what himself delivers on this subject, in one of his most remarkable pieces. But our author conceiving this account of that conversation somewhat disingenuous, thought it requisite to give him-

* The Rev. Stephen Nye, in his treatise on the Trinity, 1701, p. 166.

† Moreri's Dictionary, ed. 1740, art. Allix, vol. i. p. 316.

self a short relation of that affair, to which he adds many things equally curious and important.

Dr. Allix enjoyed a very uncommon share of health and spirits, as appears by his latest writings, in which there is not only all the erudition, but all the quickness and vivacity that appeared in his earliest pieces. Those who knew him found the same pleasure in his conversation, that the learned will always find in his productions; for with a prodigious share of learning, he had a wonderful liveliness of temper, and expressed himself on the most abstruse subjects with so much sprightliness, and in a manner so out of the common road, that it was impossible to flag or lose one's attention, to what was the subject of his discourse. He was consulted by the greatest men of his age, on the deepest and most intricate parts of learning, and was acknowledged for a genius of the first order, by those whom the world have esteemed, not only the most capable but the most unbiassed critics. It was not any single branch of literature, or a few related to each other, that could occupy his thoughts, but the whole circle of sciences which fall under the cognizance of a general scholar and a sound divine. All these he had not only tasted but digested, as appears by his excellence in different and almost opposite studies. His sermons shew him to have been an admirable orator, and at the same time a profound scholar. The several ancient authors he published testify his skill in criticism, and his perfect acquaintance with antiquity. His Treatises on Ecclesiastical History discover a prodigious fund of reading, an exact comprehension of his subject, and his sincere zeal for the Protestant

religion. He laboured also to serve it by the tracts he rescued from dust and oblivion, to shew (as they effectually did) that the charge of novelty on which the Papists insisted so loudly, was not barely unreasonable, but at the same time groundless. His thorough acquaintance with Hebrew and Rabbinical learning, with whatever depends thereupon in Greek and other languages, was displayed in his laborious performance in defence of the doctrine of the Trinity, in which his sincerity is as conspicuous as his learning. Our author continued his application to the last, and having spun out the thread to an extraordinary extent, died at London, February 21st, 1717, in the seventy-sixth year of his age, leaving behind him the reputation of a man equally assiduous in the right discharge of all the offices of public and private life, and every way as amiable for his virtues and social qualities, as venerable for his uprightness and integrity, and famous for his various and profound learning.

ACCOUNT OF HIS WRITINGS.

AT the time our author first appeared in the world, the controversy about the Eucharist was very warm; and the ablest Protestant Divines were employed in writing on that subject. His earliest performance was entitled,

I. Response à la Dissertation sur Bertram & Jean Scot, ou Erigene, qui es à la fin du premier Tome de la Perpetuité de M. Arnaud; *i. e. An Answer to a dissertation on Bertram and John Scot, which is at the end of the perpetuity of the faith by Mr. Arnaud.* This short treatise of our author, is at the close of John Claude's answer to Mr. Arnaud's book. As for the dissertation, in answer to which it was written, the author of it was, Father Anselm Paris, Canon Regular of St. Genevieve, who replied to him in another book, entitled, Créance de l'Eglise Grecque sur la Transubstantiation; *i. e. The Faith of the Greek Church as to Transubstantiation.* To clear up this matter our author published,

II. Ratramne, ou Bertrand, Prêtre, du Corps, & du Sang du Seigneur. En Latin, & en Francois. Rouen, 1672, 12mo. *i. e. Ratramn, or Bertrand, the priest, on the body and blood of our Lord, in Latin and French.* The design of our author in publishing this version, was to shew that Bertrand differed in his sentiments on this subject, from the Church of Rome, as appears by an advertisement prefixed to the book. James Boileau published another translation of this ancient author, with a long preface, in order to prove that his opinions did not deviate at all from those of the Romish Church.

III. Dissertatio de Trisagii origine, Autore P. A. V. D. M. (Petro Allix, Verbi Dei Ministro) Rothomagi 1674, 8vo. *i. e. A dissertation on the first rise of the Trisagium or Doxology; by Peter Allix,* &c. The learned Bayle, in an epistle of his, to Dr Theodore Jansen, takes notice of this work, ascribes it to our author, and mentions a mistake committed by Maimbourgh, in ascribing it to another person.

IV. Dissertatio de Sanguine D. N. J. C. ad Epistolam S. Augustini quà num adhuc existat inquiritur, 8vo. *i. e. A Dissertation on the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ,* &c. The precise date of this small treatise does not appear; but that it was much esteemed, and reprinted by the learned Crenius, and that he was in some measure mistaken as to its author, we learn from an epistle of Mr. Bayle, to that industrious editor on this subject.

V. Dissertatio de Tertulliani vita & scriptis, 8vo. *i. e. A Dissertation on the life and writings of Tertullian.* There is an abridged translation of this very learned and accurate performance, at the close of the French version of Tertullian's Apologetic, by M. de Giry. It was also printed, together with the following dissertation, on the authority of certain councils, by Crenius, as appears from the epistle before cited.

VI. *Dissertatio de Conciliorum quorumvis definitionibus ad examen revocandis, 8vo.* According to all circumstances, these curious and elegant performances, were all of them sent abroad in 1680, or thereabouts, and must have contributed to raise the author's character exceedingly, by shewing his solid and extensive learning, especially in points of ecclesiastical history, and criticism.

VII. Anastasii Sinaitæ anagogicarum contemplationum in Hexahemeron, lib. xii. hactenus desideratus, Græcè & Latinè, ex versione & cum notis Andreæ Dacerii. Præmissa Expostulatio de S. Joannis Chrysostomi Epistola ad Cæsarium à Parisiensibus Theologis nuper suppressa. Londini 1682, 4to. *i. e. Anastasius his twelfth book of Contemplations, on the six days work of the creation, which has been hitherto so much desired, in Greek and Latin, from the version, and with the notes of Andrew Dacier. To which is prefixed, an expostulatory preface, in relation to an epistle of St. John Chrysostom to Cæsarius, lately suppressed by some Parisian divines.* This Anastasius was Archbishop of Antioch about the year 561. The first eleven books of these

Contemplations had been long before published, and these were earnestly desired, to render his work complete. The Papists were at that time very assiduous in publishing the Christian Fathers, and the most learned Protestants took care to examine their editions, and to give the world early notice of any attempt to conceal, or to obtrude, under colour of publishing these valuable monuments of antiquity.

VIII. Douze Sermons de P. A. Ministre du S. Evangile sur divers textes. A Rotterdam chez Reinier Leers, 1685, 12mo. *i. e. Twelve Sermons by Peter Allix, Minister of the Holy Ghost, upon several Texts.*

IX. Les Maximes du vrai Chrétien, *i. e. The maxims of a good Christian.* This was joined to another treatise, intitled, Bonnes & saintes pensees pour touts les jour du mois. Amsterdam 1687; *i. e. Good and holy thoughts, for every day in the month.* He was, before this time, withdrawn from France, and therefore at liberty to send into the world in print, what, without danger to himself, and to his congregation, he could not have delivered at Charenton. This work was entitled,

X. L'Adieu de Saint Paul aux Ephesiens, Sermon sur les versets 26, 27, 28, du xx Chapitre des Actes. Amsterdam 1688, 12mo. *i. e. St. Paul's farewel to the Ephesians, a sermon upon Acts* xx. 26, 27, 28. In this, he represents the necessity of supporting temporal and spiritual afflictions with patience and resignation, and the duty of professing the Faith, and adhering to it with constancy, in perilous as well as peaceable times.

XI. *Reflections upon the Books of the Holy Scripture, to establish the Truth of the Christian Religion.* In two Volumes, London 1686. This treatise we find licensed for the press by Dr. H. Maurice, Chaplain to Dr. William Sancroft, then Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, January 12, 1687,8. There is a large extract from the first edition of the first volume of this work, and a good character given of it in a Literary Journal published jointly by Messieurs Le Clerc and la Croze. But the whole was completely published in English, on account of the countenance the author met with from King James, to whom he wrote a dedication, which however is missing in some copies. In 1785, this book was reprinted, with corrections, in a collection of Theological Tracts, by Dr. Watson, Bishop of Landaff, from which copy it was judged most advisable to print the present edition.

XII. Determinatio F. Joannis Parisiensis de modo existendi Corpus Christi in Sacramento Altaris, alio quam sit ille quem tenet Ecclesia. Nunc primum edita ex MS. Cod. S. Victoris Parisiensis; cui præfixa est Præfatio Historica de Dogmate Transubstantiationis. Londini 1686, 8vo. *i. e. The determination of brother, John Paris Jacobin, as to the mode of our Lord's Body existing in the sacrament of the altar; different from that held by the Church. Now first printed from a MS. at St. Victor's in Paris; to which is prefixed, an historical preface, as to the Doctrine of Transubstantiation.* This historical preface, is entirely the work of our author, in which he incontestably proves

that this point of Christ's presence in the sacrament, was quite unsettled in the earliest ages of the Christian Church, and never considered as an article of faith, even in the Church of Rome, till declared so, for particular reasons, by the council of Trent.

XIII. *Some remarks upon the ecclesiastical History of the ancient Churches of Piedmont, by P. Allix, D. D.* London 1690, 4to. This treatise was licensed for the press, September 23, 1689. by Dr. Z. Isham, Chaplain to Dr. Henry Compton, Lord Bishop of London. Our author dedicates this work to King William, and pays him very high compliments on his zeal for the Protestant Religion; to support and defend which, he tells him, God had raised his Majesty up in that critical conjuncture. The design of this very learned and accurate performance was to refute what the Bishop of Meaux had advanced on this subject, in his famous book, entitled, *The History of the Variations of the Protestants in Matters of Faith:* a book that did then, and has since, done more hurt to the Protestants, than any thing else that has been published on that side. The aim of our author in this admirable performance (which contains twenty-eight chapters) was to shew the true state of the case, with respect to the succession of doctrines, in several parts of Italy, but more especially in the vallies of Piedmont from the second century; which with great labour and industry he collected, and with laudable candour and ingenuity has published to the world, by which it plainly appears, that he did not intend to amuse them with an affected display of learning, but to vindicate the truth, by setting the History of these Churches in its proper light. It was by doing this, that he has fully proved the Romish Prelate's book can affect none, but such as do not inquire into the truth of the facts he reports; and proves farther, that all inquiries of this nature, are injurious to the Popish cause, inasmuch as they tend to render it evident, that the errors and power of the Romish Church, had in all ages, contrary to what they would persuade the world, been detected and opposed. It was in prosecution of the same view, and to continue what he had so happily begun, that he sent abroad.

XIV. *Remarks upon the Ecclesiastical History of the ancient Churches of the Albigenses. By Peter Allix, D. D. Treasurer of the Church of Sarum,* London 1692, 4to. This treatise the author dedicated to the Queen; *i. e.* to Queen Mary, daughter to his first patron King James; and in that dedication, he lays open the design of this treatise, and the reasons of his submitting it to her Majesty's view, very fairly and freely. In the book itself, there is all the good sense and sound learning, that the severest critic could expect upon the subject. In it he very strenuously and judiciously defends the Albigenses from the charges of heresy and schism, which the Bishop of Meaux had brought against them, and with great force retorts upon him his own arguments; by shewing that a constant and vigorous opposition of the power of the Church of Rome, founded not only on a disavowal of her authority, but on a difference from her also in

opinion, is far from proving either heresy or schism in the opponents, but rather shews persecution on one side, and a great zeal for truth on the other. He examines likewise, in the course of his remarks, abundance of curious and important questions, with much freedom, learning, and impartiality, traces the progress of the sentiments maintained by the Albigenses into Spain, and discovers how far, and in what degree, the same notions were diffused here in England, by the famous Wickliff and his disciples. By way of appendix, there are added to this work, an extract of several trials of pretended heretics, taken from the register of Sarum; which serve to confirm the facts laid down in the discourse itself, as to the conformity of the religious sentiments of the Albigenses, with those of the Lollards; a kind of reproachful term bestowed on the Wickliffites here, as Hugonot was on the professors of the Protestant Religion in France.

XV. *The Judgment of the Ancient Jewish Church, against the Unitarians in the Controversy upon the Holy Trinity, and the Divinity of our blessed Saviour: With a Table of Matters and a Table of Texts of Scripture occasionally explained. By a Divine of the Church of England,* London 1689, 8vo. In order to understand clearly the nature and design of this work, it is requisite to observe, that the Unitarians, in answer to Bishop Bull's learned vindication, had published several treatises, in which they asserted that Justin Martyr, who lived 140 years after Christ, was the original author of the notion of our Saviour's divinity, and consequently of the Trinity. To establish this paradox, they maintained, I. That since the Jews had asserted the Messiah to be no more than man, as appears from the dialogue between Justin Martyr and Trypho the Jew, it must necessarily follow, that all the Jewish authors, cited by Dr. Bull, against the opinion of the Socinians, must have lived after the publication of the gospel. II. That the Books of the Jews, which he cites against the Socinians, are the pious frauds of some Christians, who have lived since Justin Martyr: and this is believed to be particularly true of the books of Philo the Jew, and of that of Wisdom. III. That the Jews could not speak of the Trinity, or of the Divinity of the Messiah, because they knew nothing of either; and therefore we must necessarily suppose, that whatever is found in their works, and which seems to favour these doctrines, must have been inserted by Christians, who lived after the time of Justin Martyr. IV. In fine, that if after all there be any thing either in the Scripture, or in the writings of the ancient Jews, conformable to these doctrines, it very probably proceeded from the Platonics, from whose writings the Jews and Christians borrowed many notions, which they mingled with the doctrines of the gospel, in order to render them more acceptable to the Pagans. The great design therefore, of our author's book is, to refute these assertions; and not only so, but to examine the matter to the bottom, and to prove that the ancient Jewish Church had, with respect to the Trinity, and the Divinity of the Messiah, the very same ideas at the bottom, that the Christian Church hath at this day, only less clear and exact. This was a great undertaking, and required a most extensive knowledge in Greek and Hebrew

literature, which every body must allow our author has shewn, and managed this whole controversy with equal perspicuity and erudition. It seems he had before written in support of Bishop Bull, but without putting his name to the treatise; and, therefore, I have not been able to discover its title. These treatises created the doctor a great many enemies, and amongst the most furious, Mr. Stephen Nye, Rector of Hormead, who charged him with Tritheism.

XVI. De Messiæ duplici adventu Dissertationes duæ adversus Judæos. Londini 1701, 12mo. *i. e. Of the two Advents of the Messiah, in as many Dissertations against the Jews.* It was this treatise, that hurt the author with many people, on account of some extraordinary things that are advanced in it. He had, for example, mentioned some computations, according to which, the second coming of Christ was fixed to the year 1720, or to 1736, at the latest.

XVII. *Preface and Arguments on the Psalms.* This was written in English, and the author of a critical Journal, tells us our author found them to abound with prophecies, and disapproved extremely such as admitted two senses, or what is called a double completion.

XVIII. Nectarii Patriarchæ Hierosolymitani Confutatio Imperii Papæ in Ecclesiam. Londini, 1702, 8vo. *i. e. Nectarius Patriarch of Jerusalem, his Confutation of the Pope's Authority in the Church.* This was a translation made by our author into Latin, from the Greek original printed in 1672, in Moldavia; it was a pretty large octavo, and contained abundance of curious facts, more especially as to the claim made by both Churches, to the proof of their orthodoxy by miracles, which it is on both sides supposed, God will never work in favour of any but the true Church.

XIX. Augusti Hermanni Francke Manuductio ad Lectionem Scripturæ Sacræ, edita studio P. Allix. Londini 1706, 8vo. *i. e. Augustus Herman Francke's Introduction to the reading of the Holy Scriptures, published by Dr. Allix.* Our author only wrote a short prefatory recommendation to this book, in order to make it known here in England, and to certify its usefulness and worth.

XX. Dissertatio de Jesu Christo Domini nostri anno & mense Natali. Londini 1707 & 1710, 8vo. *i. e A Dissertation on the Year and Month of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

XXI. *The Prophecies which Mr. Whiston applies to the Times immediately following the Appearance of the Messiah, considered and examined. London,* 1707, 8vo.

XXII Preparations a la Cene, 8vo. *i. e. Preparations for the Lord's Supper.* This practical piece was often printed at Geneva, and is commended as a very excellent performance in its kind.

XXIII. *Remarks upon some Places of Mr. Whiston's Books, either printed or in manuscript. By P. Allix, D. D. London,* 1711, 8vo. The account he gives us of his conversation with Mr. Whiston is very particular, and very worthy of the reader's notice; and therefore, as well as in regard to the scarceness of this tract, which is but a pamphlet, I will give the whole passage in the author's own words, esteeming it a very entertaining part of his personal history. 'The late Dr. Payne, as Mr. Whiston

'saith (for I think they both joined in the question), having 'asked me, Whether the Holy Spirit was addressed to in the 'public prayers of the primitive Church? I answered, that if 'they had ever read the works of St. Basil the Great, they would 'have found a satisfactory answer to their question; for that he 'had writ a large discourse on that very subject, in which he not 'only supposes, that all their public prayers were directed to the 'Father by the intercession of the Son in the Holy Spirit; but 'proves likewise, that the Deity of the Spirit was generally sup- 'posed by the Church in that form, though it was not formally 'directed to him alone. I advised him to read that piece of St. 'Basil, who had a natural occasion of examining this matter, by 'the complaint which was made against him; that in the Doxo- 'logy he used indifferently, these words: *Glory be to the Father, 'with the Son, and in,* or *with, the Holy Ghost.* And indeed, 'St. Basil writing near fifty years after the rise of Arianism, '(which gave the hint to Macedonius, Bishop of Constantino- 'ple, to deny the Divinity of the Holy Ghost, and to do all he 'could to support his heresy) had solidly defended the sense of 'the primitive Church, in all times and places, concerning the 'Deity of the Holy Spirit; and confuted all the arguments of the 'Macedonians. This is the substance of that conversation; and, 'I am sure, the Divines, and Ministers, who were there and 'then present, little thought, I had therein given any occasion 'for such a charge as Mr. Whiston has now, at the distance of 'twelve or thirteen years, publicly brought against me. He has 'given me, indeed, the title of *The very learned Doctor,* &c. 'But, as he doubtless has his reasons for what he does, I sup- 'pose, he might design, at the same time, that it should serve 'for the justification of himself. *Timeo Danaos & Dona feren- 'tes.* Some months ago, one of Mr. Whiston's friends told me, 'he had heard from Mr. Whiston, such an account of that con- 'versation, as he has since printed. I then told the gentleman 'the whole truth of the matter, and what then passed between 'us: but I thought it of so little importance, that though Mr. 'Whiston came afterwards to visit me, in company with some 'friends of his, I did not think it necessary to take any notice of 'it, after the explanation I had given his friends, and which in 'all probability came to his ears; especially, since I could not 'have done it, without blaming him for his incivility, in making 'his own use of what I had said, by changing the state of the 'question, and suppressing a part of my answer: an incivility so 'much the greater, because I had referred them to St. Basil's 'book, *de Spiritu Sancto,* for an account of my sentiments about 'the question they proposed. I have had several opportunities 'of conversing with Mr. Whiston, and I am satisfied he never 'looked upon me as one who inclined in the least to his opinions. 'I thought him a studious man, and had a respect for him as 'such; and he will do me the justice to acknowledge, that I 'always spoke my mind to him very freely and sincerely; but 'that I never approved of the liberties he took, which indeed 'were more than could be well borne with.'

CONTENTS.

PART FIRST.

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	*Concerning the Fundamentals of the Christian Religion,*	1
II.	*That the Christian Religion is founded upon Proofs of Matter of Fact,*	4
III.	*Some general Remarks in order to establish the Truth of Holy Scripture,*	6
IV.	*That the testimony of Moses concerning the Creation of the World, and the Promise of the Messiah, is unquestionable,*	13
V.	*That Moses is the Author of the Book of Genesis,*	18
VI.	*That the Book of Genesis could not be forged under the Name of Moses,*	21
VII.	*That it appears from Genesis, that the Sabbath was constantly observed from the Beginning of the World until Moses,*	27
VIII.	*That Adam was convinced of his Creation by Reason and Authority,*	36
IX.	*That Adam was confirmed by his own Experience, in the Persuasion he had entertained concerning his Creation,*	40
X.	*That the Children of Adam had reason to be convinced of the Creation,*	42
XI.	*That the Children of Adam were actually convinced of the Truth of the Creation, and the Promise of the Messiah,*	44
XII.	*That Noah was fully persuaded of the Creation of the world, and the Promise of the Messiah,*	50
XIII.	*That the Children of Noah were convinced of the Truth of these Matters,*	52

CHAP. PAGE

XIV. *That the Posterity of Noah's Children were persuaded of the Truth of the Creation, and first Promise,* . . 54

XV. *That we find the Family of Abraham, and his Posterity till Jacob, fully persuaded of those Truths,* 58

XVI. *That this very Persuasion seems to have been kept up amongst the Posterity of Jacob, until Moses's Time,* . 66

XVII. *That the Tradition which gives us an Account of the Persuasion which the Ancients had of the Truth of the Creation of the World, and of the Promise of the Messiah before Moses, cannot be suspected,* 70

XVIII. *An Explication of Moses's Way of Writing; where it is shewed, that in writing the Book of Genesis, he mentioned nothing but what was then generally known,* 73

XIX. *An Answer to an Objection which may be drawn from the Histories of the Egyptians and Chaldeans, concerning the Antiquity of the World,* . . . 78

XX. *An Answer to the Objection which may be drawn out of the History of China, against the Mosaic Hypothesis, concerning the Newness of the World,* 87

XXI. *Wherein the last Objection of Atheists is answered,* 99

XXII. *The Consequences of what we have proved in our foregoing Observations upon the Book of Genesis,* . . . 103

PART SECOND.

I. *That it cannot reasonably be doubted, but that Moses is the Author of Exodus, ond of the three other following Books,* 113

CHAP. PAGE

II. *That both the Character of Moses's Person, and the Nature of the Things he relates, have always made Men read his Books with Attention,* . . 120

III. *That the Truth of the Miracles related by Moses cannot reasonably be doubted of,* 126

IV. *A Continuation of the Proofs of the Truth of the Miracles wrought by Moses,* 130

V. *That Moses's Description of the Manner of God's giving him his Laws, is evidently true,* 135

VI. *Some other Proofs that confirm Moses's Description of the Manner how the Law was given and promulgated,* . 139

VII. *That there is no just Exception can be made against Moses's History, in what relates to the Oracles which he hath recorded in his Books,* 142

VIII. *That the Testimony of the Jews is a constant Proof of the Truth of the Oracles related by Moses,* . . 145

IX. *That it appears, by the Nature of his Reflections, that Moses had the Messias in View when he wrote the Book of Genesis,* 148

X. *That the same Persuasion appears throughout the whole Conduct of Moses, until his death,* 152

XI. *That Balaam's Prophecy, which Moses relates, is a further Argument of the same Persuasion in him,* . . 155

XII. *That one may see also, in Moses's Law, plain Footsteps of God's Design, in distinguishing these from whom he would have the Messiah to be born,* . 160

XIII. *That the Manner of God's promulgating his Law amongst the Israelites, did much conduce to the distinguishing them from all other Nations,* . . 164

CHAP. PAGE

XIV. *That God seems to have designed to keep up a Spirit of Jealousy in the very Bosom of the Jewish Nation,* . . 169

XV. *That Circumcision was a Means of distinguishing the Israelites from other Nations,* 173

XVI. *That the Law of Moses engaged the Jews to the Study of their Genealogies, that they might certainly know that of the Messiah,* 179

XVII. *A Solution of some Difficulties in these Genealogies,* 183

XVIII. *That the Manner whereby the Law of Moses fixed the People of Israel to the Land of Canaan, was to keep them separated from other Nations,* . 189

XIX. *That the Law tied the People of Israel to the Land of Canaan, and by several other Means established the Distinction betwixt Tribes and Families amongst them,* 192

XX. *That the Laws which Moses made concerning the State of Virginity, did principally relate also to the Messiah, which holds also as to several other Laws,* 198

XXI. *That it was the Design of God, by all these Ceremonies, and particularly by that Veneration which he inspired the Jews with, for the Tabernacle, to preserve the Ideas of the Messiah, whom he had promised, in their Minds, by distinguishing them from all other Nations,* 205

XXII. *That it appears by the Books of Moses that this whole Model which God had framed, was to last but until the Coming of the Messiah,* . . . 210

PART THIRD.

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	*That there is, in the Historical Writings of the Old Testament, an uninterrupted Series of Events, which have a natural and necessary Dependance for more than ten Ages,*	223
II.	*That there is a strict Connection between the Sacred History, and the oldest Monuments which we have of Profane History,*	229
III.	*That there is an uninterrupted Series of Events foretold by the sacred Oracles, of which we may see a very great Number accomplished in every Age,*	235
IV.	*That how common soever Oracles may have been amongst the Pagans, yet nothing amongst them can justly be compared with those which are found amongst the Jews,*	242
V.	*That the Books in which we may find these Oracles, were never forged,*	246
VI.	*That the Manner of writing the Prophetical Books of the Old Testament, shews that those Oracles could not have been forged after their Completion,*	252
VII.	*For what Reason the Oracles which relate to the Messiah, were interwoven with other Things which seem to be very widely distant,*	260
VIII.	*General Rules for the Understanding of ancient Oracles, and for the Application of them to the Messiah,*	265
IX.	*Of those Oracles concerning the Messiah which are to be found in the Book of Genesis.*	272
X.	*Of the Oracles which concern the Messiah in the Book of Psalms,*	281
XI.	*Considerations upon the Sufferings of the Messiah, and upon his glorious Ascension into Heaven, foretold by David in the* xxiid *and* cxth *Psalms,*	289

CHAP. PAGE

XII. *That the Messiah was to have a Forerunner, and what was to be his Character,* 296

XIII. *That the Messiah was to be born before the Dissolution of the Jewish State, and the Destruction of the Second Temple,* 299

XIV. *That the Messiah was to be born of a Virgin of the House of David,* . . . 306

XV. *That the Messiah was to be born at Bethlehem of the Family of David, which at that Time was reduced to a private State,* 311

XVI. *That the Messiah was to work great Miracles, for establishing of his Mission, and of the Truth of his Doctrine,* 315

XVII. *That the Messiah was to be an illustrious Prophet,* 317

XVIII. *That the Messiah was to propound a new Covenant from God with all Men,* 320

XIX. *That the Jews, by a dreadful Effect of their Blindness, were to reject the Messiah,* 326

XX. *That the Messiah was to die; and an Account of the several Circumstances of his Death,* 330

XXI. *That the Messiah was soon after to rise again,* 335

XXII. *That the Messiah was to ascend into Heaven, and send down from thence the miraculous Gifts of Prophecy, Languages, &c.* 339

XXIII. *That the Gentiles in the Time of the Messiah were to be called to the Knowledge of the true God,* 343

XXIV. *That the Jews were to be rejected in the Time of the Messiah,* 350

XXV. *Of the Time which succeeded the publishing of these Prophecies, till the coming of the Messiah,* 354

PART FOURTH.

CHAP. PAGE

I. *That there appears a very just Connection between the Ideas of the Old Testament, and those of the New, the latter borrowing Light from the former,* 369

II. *That the Ideas of the Messiah continued very fresh in the Minds of the Jews at the Time of the Coming of our Saviour Jesus Christ,* 376

III. *That the Commonwealth of the Jews did still subsist, and follow the Model which God had formed, in order to the certain Knowing of the Messiah,* . 381

IV. *That all the Distinctions necessary for discovering of the Messiah, still continued in the State of the Jews, at the Time of our Lord,* 387

V. *That the Time pointed out by the Prophets for the Coming of the Messiah, is the very Time in which Jesus Christ appeared to the World,* 391

VI. *That Jesus Christ had precisely such a Forerunner as the Prophets had described to precede the Messiah,* . . 395

VII. *That Jesus Christ was born of the Family of David, then reduced to a mean Condition as had been already foretold by the Prophets,* . . 400

VIII. *That Jesus Christ was conceived by the Virgin Mary without any Operation of Man,* 407

IX. *That Jesus Christ lived and preached after the same Manner as the Prophets had foretold the Messiah should do,* 413

X. *That the Miracles wrought by our Saviour clearly prove that he is the Messiah,* 419

CHAP. PAGE

XI. *That the Predictions of our Lord Jesus Christ clearly prove him to be the Messiah,* 424

XII. *That Jesus Christ died precisely in the same Manner as it was foretold that the Messiah should die,* 431

XIII. *That Jesus Christ was raised again the third Day, according to the Prophets, and afterwards ascended into Heaven,* 437

XIV. *That Jesus Christ sent to his Apostles, and to the Primitive Christians, the miraculous Gifts of his Holy Spirit, as he had promised in the ancient Prophecies,* 447

XV. *That according to the Prophecies, the Apostles of Jesus Christ have called the Gentiles to the Profession of the Christian Religion,* 452

XVI. *That the Christian Religion is founded on Proofs of Fact, and that consequently nothing in the World is so certain as the Truth of it,* 458

XVII. *That it cannot be questioned, whether the Books of the New Testament were written by the Apostles,* 456

XVIII. *That one cannot doubt the Faithfulness of the Witness of the Apostles concerning those Facts which they relate,* 470

XIX. *More Reason to manifest the Faithfulness of the Apostles,* 475

XX. *That the whole Model of the Religion and Commonwealth of the Jews is at this Day so entirely destroyed, that the Messiah could no more be known,* 480

XXI. *That the Greatness of the Mysteries of the Christian Religion, and the Division which is amongst Christians, cannot be any prejudice to the Proofs of the Truth of the Christian Religion,* 485

REFLECTIONS

UPON THE

Books of the Holy Scripture,

TO ESTABLISH THE TRUTH

OF THE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

PART FIRST.

ON THE BOOK OF GENESIS.

REFLECTIONS,

&c. &c.

PART FIRST.

ON THE BOOK OF GENESIS.

CHAP. I.

Concerning the Fundamentals of the Christian Religion.

WE are to consider three things in the Christian Religion; the Matters of Fact it propounds to us for true, the Promises it affords us, and the Worship it commands.

The Matters of Fact it propounds to us as true, are—that God created the world; that he formed the first man, from whom the rest of mankind have been propagated; that a while after this man was created, he violated the law God had given him; and that whereas he deserved to have perished for this his disobedience, God was pleased, instead thereof, to comfort him with the hopes of a Saviour which was to be born of the seed of his wife; that God hath actually sent this Saviour into the world, which comprehends the whole economy of Christ, viz. his birth,

life, preaching, miracles, death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven, &c.

The Promises it vouchsafes, are the forgiveness of our sins, the resurrection of our bodies, and a state absolutely happy for ever in heaven.

And lastly, the Worship or divine service it prescribes consists in obedience to the Law of God, in prayer for the pardon of our sins, and his protection, and in a grateful acknowledgment of what we owe him for all his benefits towards us.

The first of these three parts of the Christian Religion, viz. the truth of the Matters of Fact it relates, may be said to be the foundation of the other two, viz. the Promises and Commands.

It is impossible to be persuaded, that God hath created this world in which we live, and made mankind of one and the same blood; that after the fall he promised to save men, and did actually redeem them in sending Jesus Christ, who suffered death, and being raised the third day ascended into heaven, &c. I say, it is impossible to look upon these facts as true without being assured that God will accomplish the promises he hath made to us.

And it is as evident that we cannot be convinced of the truth of these matters, without being sensible of a strong obligation laid upon us to perform all the duties of the Christian religion.

As soon as a man reflects upon his being God's creature, he finds himself naturally obliged to obey God universally, according to his utmost ability: but when he comes further to believe, that God did not destroy the first man for his disobedience, but was graciously pleased to promise him a Saviour for himself and all his posterity; and when moreover he is assured, that God hath really sent this Saviour in the way and manner the Gospel relates to us; we cannot conceive but that he must find himself under the highest engagements imaginable of rendering

to God a religious obedience, and believing his promises.

But there is yet another obligation whereby man is bound to obey God, to pray to him, and to offer him all manner of religious worship: God, by redeeming him, hath obtained a new claim to, and right over him; and a more indispensable obligation is laid upon man to submit himself to God, in all religious concerns, as being not only created but also redeemed by him.

Reason acknowledgeth, that if the truth of these things be once admitted, nothing can be more just and natural than those consequences which the Christians thence infer.

All the difficulty, therefore, that occurs in this matter, consists in the proof of those facts which the Christian religion propounds to us; that is to say, in proving the creation of the world, the fall of man, the promise of a Redeemer, his coming into the world, his miracles, death, resurrection, ascension into heaven, &c. which are the foundations of the Christian Religion. And indeed these are the very matters of which Atheists and libertines require a solid proof.

And it doth the more concern us to satisfy their demands, forasmuch as the Jews, who are scattered throughout the whole world, do oppose our assertion that the promise of sending the Messiah is already accomplished, though they agree upon the matter with us in all other articles. Moreover, the performing this task may very much contribute to the conversion of a great number of bad Christians, whose fall and continuance in vices and licentiousness is to be ascribed to their being so weakly persuaded of the truth of these Fundamentals, and that because they have never considered of them with sufficient attention.

CHAP. II.

That the Christian Religion is founded upon Proofs of Matter of Fact.

FORASMUCH as, in order to establish the truth of the Christian Religion, we confine ourselves at present to those Proofs which make out the Matters of Fact it proposes; omitting all other arguments which may evidence the truth of it, though possibly no less convincing; it is obvious, that the proofs we are to produce in confirmation of them, must be such as are proper to evince the truth of things long since past and done.

If we were treating of the events of the time we live in, it might be justly required that we should produce eye-witnesses of them; but forasmuch as the question here is concerning matters long since past, it is natural for us to have recourse to history, which furnisheth us with the relations of those who were eye-witnesses of the same; this being the only way left us to confirm our belief of things at so great a distance from us.

I am beholden to history only for the knowledge I have of a Cyrus, an Alexander, or a Cæsar; and yet having read the account they give me of them, I find them matters I can no way rationally doubt of.

I acknowledge that the certainty we have of things long since past, is much inferior to that which we have of matters confirmed to us by eye-witnesses. Nevertheless, because it is evident that the events of ancient times cannot be confirmed but by proofs of this nature, it has never entered into the minds of any to account the existence of such men as Cyrus and Alexander for fables, upon the pretence that none now alive did ever see them, or because there are

scarce any traces left of those empires of which they were the founders.

Indeed the certainty we have of these things is such as nothing can be superadded to it; for though it be founded on the authority of historians who lived many ages ago, yet withal we are to consider that the matters related do not only carry the idea of probability and truth along with them, but that they are the very ground and foundation of all the histories of following ages; which cannot be questioned, if we consider the connection and dependence of the things related, according to the light of sense, and the equity of reason.

A Matter of Fact then is accounted certain, when it is attested by those who were eye-witnesses of it, when recorded by an historian who lived amongst those who had perfect knowledge of it; when the matter is not gainsaid or contradicted by any; if we find it penned at a time when the things could not be related by any otherwise than indeed they were, without exposing themselves to public derision; and last of all, when the matter is found to be of that nature, as none could be ignorant of it, either because it was the interest of every one to be informed of it, or because the thing was so public that it could not be hid from any; or lastly, because of its natural connection with all those other events which necessarily depend on it.

To speak plain, it is very unjust to demand either more proofs, or such as are of another nature, for the confirmation of the truth of our religion, than are required to verify any other matters of fact. Why should not the testimony of Noah's children be sufficient to conclude there was such a man as Methusalem, in case they assure us that they have seen him? Or why should not the testimony of Methusalem be of credit enough to prove there was such a man as Adam, if he avers that he saw him, and conversed with him? Do we not every day give credit to the

account which old men give us of their predecessors, especially when we find that what they relate hath an exact reference and connection with those things we are eye-witnesses of?

But it is an easy thing to make it appear, that the proofs which evidence the truth of the matters which our religion proposeth, are infinitely more strong and convincing.

All the circumstances we can imagine proper to evince the truth of any relation, do concur to place the matters recorded in holy Scripture beyond the reach of doubt or uncertainty.

We account the single testimony of an historian a sufficient proof that there was once a very famous temple at *Delphos* or *Ephesus*, notwithstanding that all the monuments remaining at this day to confirm his relation be very doubtful and defective. Whereas I shall make it appear that an entire nation, yea, many nations, do attest the truth of those matters which the Christian Religion proposes; and that all the actions, discourses, and whole series of events thereto relating, do furnish us with an infinite number of characters which invincibly signalize the truth of the holy Scriptures.

CHAP. III.

Some general Remarks, in order to establish the Truth of Holy Scripture.

FORASMUCH as I have undertaken to prove the truth of the Matters of Fact contained in our Religion from the testimony of the penmen of the Old and New Testament, it will be proper, in order to the executing of my design, to begin with a general proof of the truth of the said books; which will not be difficult, if one makes the following remarks.

The first is, That it appears from the five books of Moses, that he wrote the history of the creation of the world, and of the promise of the Messiah; of the deluge, the rise and pedigree of the several nations of the world, of the division of tongues; and in particular, the history of the family of Abraham until the entering of the children of Israel into *Palestina*, 2552 years after the creation of the world.

The second is, That the following books, viz. of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, the four books of Kings, of Chronicles, with the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, are a continuation of the said history, from the entering of the Jews into *Palestina*, until their re-establishment in the said country, about the year of the world 3600. Here we read the conquest of *Palestina* under the conduct of Joshua, how it was divided amongst the tribes after they had destroyed, drove out, or subdued, the inhabitants thereof; how often they were brought into bondage by the bordering nations, whose rise and pretensions Moses sets down. Here we have recorded the several names and actions of the judges which God from time to time raised to the Israelites, to restore them to their first estate. Here we have an account of the establishment of a kingly government amongst them, which happened about the year 2909; as likewise of the division of this people into two kingdoms, which for three ages together were most opposite in their interests, and made great wars against each other, as well as against their neighbouring states. We find here the utter ruin of the most puissant of these two states, viz. that of *Israel* by the arms of the kings of *Assyria*, about the year of the world 3283; and after that, the destruction of that of *Judah* by Nebuchadnezzar king of the Chaldeans, *anno mundi* 3416. And last of all, we have an account of the Jews restoration by Cyrus king of *Persia*, and the state of the Jews under his successors.

The third thing observable is, That in the remaining books of the Old Testament we find several historical relations relating to both kingdoms, which several prophecies relating to their decay and restoration, as likewise many discourses of morality and piety; and that all these relations and prophecies appear to have been writ at such a time, and with those circumstances, which have a natural reference to what the other books recite to us, and an essential relation to the books and laws of Moses, which we find to be the foundation of all these prophecies, relations, and whatsoever else we find there concerning their government or religion.

The fourth is, That the books of the New Testament contain an exact relation of the life of Jesus Christ, who appeared to the world under the reign of Tiberius, of the establishment of his religion in the world, together with some disputes with the Jews, who refused to own him for the Messiah promised by the Prophets; and lastly, prophecies, declaring what in process of time was to happen both to the Jews and Christians until the end of the world. These books take the truth of Moses's writings every where for granted, as also of the other sacred writings of the Old Testament, both historical, prophetical, and moral.

These four particulars do in a manner give us an entire idea of the holy Scripture; and we shall scarcely stand in need of ought else to manifest the truth of those writings, if we consider those indisputable matters of fact I am now to speak of, and will but make some very natural reflections upon them.

The first is, That the Christians, notwithstanding their being divided into several sects and parties presently after our Saviour's time, have, and do still, in all places, every first day of the week, read the books of the New Testament translated into their respective languages; so that it appears absolutely impossible

that any spurious writings should have been slipped in amongst them.

The second is, That as the Christians have had the books of the Old Testament amongst them in Greek these 1600 years, so the Heathens had them in that language 300 years before, being translated by order of one of the Ptolemy's kings of *Egypt*, whither a considerable party of the Jews were carried, after that Alexander the Great had conquered the greatest part of *Asia*, having overthrown the empire of *Persia*, to which the Jews were in subjection.

The third is, That though the Jews had not all the books of the Old Testament from the beginning of their commonwealth, they that followed the party of Jeroboam, and formed the kingdom of *Israel*, having only had the five books of Moses amongst them: yet notwithstanding their irreconcileable hatred against the house of David, they have most religiously preserved the said books from *anno mundi* 3030, in which the divisions of the two kingdoms happened, even until this day.

The fourth and last is, That as the Jews every where, at this day, read the books of Moses and of the Prophets each sabbath-day (which is also observed by the Samaritans), and the Christians read them every first day of the week; so the Jews have always continued to read them for a long series of ages, as esteeming it a great part of the sanctification of the sabbath. Besides which, they also solemnly read them every seventh year, in obedience to a law of Moses, as being one of the principal parts of their religion.

I say, that the sole consideration of these matters of fact (which are indisputable) are sufficient to prove in general the truth of the books of the Old and New Testament.

First then, I affirm, that it is as ridiculous to maintain, that the books of the Old and New Testament,

translated into so many languages, cited by an infinite number of authors, and which have been the subject of various disputes from the very times of the Apostles, or soon after, should be suppositious, as to aver that the books of Justinian, or Mahomet's Alcoran, have been falsely obtruded on the world under their names. I speak now only of the books themselves, not of the truth of the history they contain.

Secondly, It is ridiculous to suppose that the books of the Old Testament were forged since the time of Ptolemy Philadelphus; forasmuch as they have been in the hands of the heathens themselves ever since that time.

Thirdly, It is as inconsistent to suppose them contrived since the time of the separation of the ten tribes from *Judah*, because we find the books of Moses among the Samaritans, who have preserved them ever since their revolt, without any change but what is incident to all manuscripts that pass through many hands.

I grant indeed that the Samaritans have none of the other books of the Old Testament; but this being to be looked upon only as an effect of their departure from the kingdom of *Judah*, it cannot in the least shake the certainty we have of those books. For, first, the three other tribes had them, and preserved them with the greatest care, esteeming them of Divine authority. Secondly, there were also reasons of state which made the kings of *Israel* not to regard the divisions made by Joshua of the land of *Canaan*, nor the authority of the priesthood; which reasons of state (hereafter mentioned) were the cause why the ten tribes would not allow the same authority to some of those books which were written before their revolt, as those of Samuel, and the writings of David and Solomon, which they did to the Pentateuch of Moses. Most of the others we know were penned since the division of the two kingdoms, and so did more particularly respect the kingdom of Judah, and

some of them after the carrying away of the ten tribes by the Assyrians.

Thus we see the truth of these books, and more especially those of Moses, confirmed till the time of the revolt of the ten tribes, and confirmed beyond exception; at least far beyond the certainty we can have of the truth of any other book in the world. It remains only now to examine, whether as to the books of Moses we find not the same certainty, when we look back from the departure of the ten tribes to the time of Moses; that is to say, whether there be the least probability that they were forged in any part of that interval of about 580 years.

I say then, in the fourth place, that it is no less ridiculous to suppose them forged during that period. First, because it is impossible that these books should have been forged in the form we now see them, but that the forgery must have been apparent to all the world. Nothing could be more notorious, than whether the Jews did read the law of Moses every sabbath-day in all their families or synagogues, and every seventh year besides: nothing was of more easy observation than whether they did keep their three solemn feasts, viz. that of the Passover, Pentecost, and of Tabernacles: nothing could be more apparent than whether the Jews did obey the laws contained in the Pentateuch, whether relating to particular persons, to tribes, or their lands, and the manner of possessing of them. Indeed, nothing can be imagined more absurd, than to suppose an insensible change wrought either in the form of their civil government, or the ceremonies of their religion.

Indeed it is an insufferable piece of boldness to charge the Jews with forging these books of Moses, or adulterating of them in this period of time, when it appears they have kept them without any alteration for the space of 2700 years, as hath been shewed already. If it be said, that the Jews being divided into two kingdoms, and dispersed into distant coun-

tries, were not in a condition to forge or adulterate any of the said books, because it might easily have been discovered; it may be answered, that the same reasons took place in this interval of 580 years: for, from the time of Moses to Rehoboam, they were not only greatly divided amongst themselves, but almost continually subject to neighbouring states, who subdued them by turns, as we see in the book of Judges.

Moreover we are to take notice, First, that these books of Moses are the rise and foundation of the laws and customs of the heathens, as well as of their fictions, which we shall have occasion to point at in the sequel of this discourse.

Secondly, that the history contained in the Pentateuch is evidently confirmed by the following books of Joshua and Judges, which have an essential reference to the same, and contain a relation of the public acts of many nations, attested and acknowledged by heathen authors, who were the mortal enemies of the Jews.

Thirdly, that the said books are so closely linked and related to those public and known actions, that it is impossible to separate the laws they contain from the matters of fact attested by Pagan history, or to be ignorant that the form of the Jewish government was nothing else but an execution of the laws contained in the Pentateuch, which equally lays down that platform of their policy and worship.

My business at present only is to hint these general reflections concerning the truth of the books of the Old and New Testament; though the sequel will oblige me to make some more particular reflections upon each book, when I shall come to consider the several relations they contain.

I now come to the matter in hand, beginning with the book of Genesis; where we find an account of the creation of the world, the forming of man, the fall, the promise of the Messiah, the propagation of

mankind, the deluge, with other matters, until the death of Joseph, which contains the history of the world for the space of 2369 years.

CHAP. IV.

That the Testimony of Moses concerning the Creation of the World, and the promise of the Messiah, is unquestionable.

FORASMUCH as amongst those matters which Moses relates in the book of Genesis, that of the Creation of the World in seven days, and of the Promise of the Messiah, are such upon which all the rest do depend (as I shall shew hereafter,) it is evident that I must make it my business in a special manner to evince the truth of the same.

Towards the confirmation of which matters of fact; the one of which is, that God created a first man; the other, that God had promised in due time to send the Messiah for redemption of mankind from the punishment of sin; I shall propose the following remarks.

Moses, the great law-giver of the Jews, laid these two matters of fact as the basis of the laws he was to publish; and he relates them to us, as things which were not only known to him, and some others of the Jewish nation, but to all the people of the world, and particularly the whole nation amongst whom he lived.

To understand the force of this argument, we must mind three things: the first is, the nature of the matters themselves; the other is, the character of him that relates them; and the third, the use Moses makes of them.

For the first, nothing was more needful to be known than these two things before us; they were matters which *concern* the whole world, and of which

every one ought to be informed; they are matters about which it is not easy to be deceived, every one being in a condition to satisfy himself about them, and of which consequently they could not but be most thoroughly informed.

I dare maintain that there are no facts in profane history of importance comparable to these of the creation of the world, and the promise of the Messiah, as Moses has related them.

2. And as for the author who relates these points, it is as plain that his character did wonderfuliy contribute to the making of his book famous. He was a man illustrious, as well by reason of his education, as the rank he held amongst men; a man equally exposed to the judgment of enemies and friends, and who could not vent the least thing contrary to truth, in matters of great importance, without seeing himself immediately refuted, or rather without exposing himself to public scorn.

Besides I aver, and am ready to maintain, that we find no author of so illustrious a character as Moses was, or who is distinguished with so many essential marks of faithfulness and veracity, as appears throughout the whole tenor of his writings.

3. This will appear more evidently when we consider the use to which Moses designs these two relations of the creation of the world, and the promise of the Messiah.

In a word, his design was not, in furnishing his books with the recitals of these important facts, to engage others to read them with more attention, or to get himself reputation by exciting a curiosity in people for his books. This would not have been becoming the gravity and wisdom of so great a legislator, of whom all succeeding ages have borrowed their laws.

It is apparent, that his end in the recording of these matters was to inspire with a sense of piety and religion, those who were committed to his charge.

This is that which in general we may observe about these matters; but more particularly it is certain, that Moses's end, in recording the oracles by which God promised to Abraham the establishing his posterity in the land of Canaan, was to represent to the Jews the right they had to that land, according to the design and intent of the Divine wisdom.

But without making this particular reflection, it is clear that the law took its beginning at the twelfth of Exodus, where God prescribes to his people the manner of celebrating the passover: at least, this is the first law which God gave them through the ministry of Moses: but forasmuch as Moses's end was to justify in the minds of his people, the design he had to make them leave *Egypt*, as well as their pretentions to the land of *Canaan*, whither he was to lead them; it was natural for him to lay before them the ground of those pretensions, which he could not do without relating the whole series of the history until the time of their bondage in Egypt, which we read in Genesis; the greatest part of which only concerns the ancestors of that people, after that Moses had first laid down the grounds of religion, and that which was known to all nations.

Let us now imagine to ourselves a man endeavouring all of a sudden to introduce into the world the belief of things so far distant from common apprehension as these two points must needs be, viz. that of the creation, and the promise of Christ, in case we suppose them generally unknown: let us yet further conceive a man not only relating those things, but making them the foundation of a new sort of laws never before heard of. Is there any wit or judgment in such an undertaking? Can we therefore suppose that Moses, whose writings testify his great wisdom, should ever have entertained such unaccountable thoughts?

I dare aver that there was never any legislator so stupid and inconsiderate, as to pretend to engage a

whole people to submit themselves to the yoke of obedience, and to receive a great number of laws respecting their civil government and religion, by declaring to them two fictions, of which they had never before had the least idea.

It is also very considerable, that these things are not recited by Moses as a preface to the Decalogue, as if then first they had been proposed to Moses, or the people by God; but Moses sets them down as truths known to them all, and as principles universally admitted, and such as the mere mentioning of them could not but strongly engage the Jews to render a ready obedience to the laws which God gave to Moses in their presence of the Divine authority, of which their very senses were convinced.

Let us also consider the nature of those things, the relation of which Moses has joined with these two general points, to make an impression on the minds of the Jews. Let us consider the account he gives them of their ancestors, nearer or farther off, whom he represents as equally informed of these matters, as having severally delivered the knowledge of them to their children, and having joined to these first truths of the creation, and the promise of a Saviour, many other notions thereon depending, and which tied their hopes and expectations to the land of *Canaan*. And now judge whether Moses were not to be accused of great folly and senselessness, if he had proceeded to make such a vast people (all of the sudden) to receive for truths publicly and generally owned, what indeed was nothing but the most ridiculous and ill-cohering romance that ever was broached.

Now, since as it is visible (taking in the circumstances I have hinted) that the authority of such an historian and law-giver as Moses was, relating such important matters, cannot be called in question; it follows, that the Atheist can have nothing to object against his testimony, with the least shadow or pretence of reason. So that we may already assert, that

there is nothing better attested than the creation of the world, and the promise of Christ, which are the immovable foundations of the Christian Religion.

Nevertheless for a more evident conviction, we are willing, before we draw this conclusion, to make it appear how weak and inconsiderable all those objections are, which Atheists can possibly frame against what Moses relates concerning these matters.

What can they with reason object? Perhaps they will say, that Moses is not the author of Genesis, but that it was foisted in under his name, and consequently, that whatsoever is built upon the authority of Moses and his evidence is all without ground; or they may object, that, if Moses be indeed the author of Genesis, that he lived at such a distance of time from the things which he relates, that it makes void the authority of his writings. They may moreover allege, that Moses relates things impossible, and of which therefore those that mentioned them before, the things themselves being so long since past and done, could not be fully informed of, and that they may well be supposed greatly changed and altered by a tradition of so many ages. They may also allege, that according to the common opinion, Moses penned not these things as an historian, but as a prophet; and that the apprehension of most concerning his books are, that he wrote of things whereof the knowledge before his time was very obscure and confused, or rather were generally unknown.

They may object against these relations of Moses, that which the most ancient people, such as the Egyptians, Chaldeans, and Chinese, allege for their antiquity, which far surpasseth the date of the world according to Moses.

These are the principal ways to assault the truths which Moses relates; either by maintaining with the Atheists, on one hand, that the things which Moses relates are indeed mentioned by other authors, but that

they forged them themselves; or that Moses, being an able and refined politician, designed, by creating a belief of these matters in the Jews, to make them more submissive and obedient to him.

In a word, it may be said, that supposing the books of Genesis to be written by Moses, it was an easy matter for him to dictate whatsoever he pleased to a people who were under a law that made it capital to call in question the truth of his relations, or the authority of his laws.

This certainly is the farthest to which the height of obstinacy can carry this matter, and the very last refuge of the strongest prejudice. But it is an easy matter to confound the Atheists and Libertines in every one of these articles, and to shew that all their objections do in effect serve for nothing else but to make a more lively impression of this argument taken from matter of fact, which I have undertaken to set forth in a full and clear light.

CHAP. V.

That Moses is the Author of the Book of Genesis.

I SHALL in the sequel of this discourse make it appear, that we cannot with reason contest the authority of a tradition which hath those characters which we find in the relations contained in the book of Genesis: the only thing that can be questioned in this matter is, whether Moses, the great captain of the Israelites, and founder of their commonwealth, be the author of it. This therefore is the thing which we ought solidly to evince.

Though it seems that we might dispense with this trouble; forasmuch as it is easy to shew, that the greatest part of the most considerable events, which

are recorded in the book of Genesis, were generally believed by others as well as the Jews.

At least it must be granted, that these matters have given occasion to most of their fables, viz. to that of the chaos; to that of the marriage of Peleus and Thetis; for the forming of man, to that of Prometheus; to that of Jupiter's continued laughter for the seven first days of his life, which they looked upon as the original of the solemnity of the seventh day, known amongst the heathens; to that of the golden age, and of the deluge; to the name of Deucalion; to the fable of Janus, to that of the division of the world amongst Saturn's sons; to the name of Jupiter Hammon; to the fable of the Titans, and of the changing of women into statues of stone; to the story of the incest the gods committed with their daughters; to that of firing of the world by Phaeton; and to a great number of other fictions, which cannot be otherwise explained, as the learned have shewn at large.

Whosoever was the author of Genesis, whether Moses or another, sure it is, that he was exactly informed of the matters he relates, and that he lived soon after Joseph.

First then I say, that it appears he was fully informed of those matters of which he treats: he sets down the names of the heads or fathers of the several nations of the world, and does it so, that what he saith doth very well agree with what the most ancient historians have left us concerning that matter: he speaks of these nations, of the countries they possessed, and their kings, as of things he was perfectly informed of; he very carefully distinguishes the original of these several nations; and the same being at that time commonly known, no historian could represent them otherwise than they were, without exposing himself to the laughter of all, by endeavouring to mix fables with relations of this nature.

In the second place, I say, that this book was writ

by a man that lived soon after Joseph: he speaks very exactly of what Joseph did in his place of chief minister to Pharaoh; in particular, he sets down the first original of the fifth penny which the Egyptians, so many ages after, continued to pay to their kings, being a thing which no Egyptian could be ignorant of.

And lastly, it is visible, that this book serves for an introduction to Exodus, and the following books, which have no other foundation but the truth of those things which are related to us there, and do throughout allude and refer to the several passages of it: and that all matters of religion and worship contained in them, are founded upon the truth of the creation, and the promise of the Messiah, which we find in Genesis; and upon the truth of all those other succeeding matters of fact, until the coming of the children of Israel into *Egypt*, when Joseph was chief favourite and minister of Pharaoh.

But we have yet a more easy way to make out that Moses, whose history is contained in Exodus and the following books, is the author of Genesis.

For first, it cannot be denied that the heathens themselves have acknowledged Moses for the most ancient law-giver: for this, we have the testimonies of Plato, Polemus, Artapanus, Pythagoras, Theopompus, and Diodorus Siculus, who places Moses in the front of six of the most ancient law-givers thus; Moses, Sauchnis, Sesonchosis, Bachoris, Amasis, and Darius father of Xerxes.

But further, if, when the Lacedemonians tell us of the laws of their law-giver Lycurgus, and the Athenians of those of their Solan, we think ourselves obliged to believe them, because naturally every nation is supposed to be a faithful depositary of the laws of him who first founded their government; yea, if we do not in the least doubt of these relations, though there be no people at this day who live according to the laws of Lycurgus or Solon; can any valuable reason be

imagined, for us to doubt whether Moses wrote the book of Genesis, when an entire nation have constantly averred that he did so? I say, when all the Jews, who continue at this day, do in all places, where they are scattered throughout the world equally and with one consent, maintain that they received this book from him, together with the laws and worship therein contained? Nay, when it is notorious that many of them have suffered martyrdom in confirmation of this truth?

I omit now to mention the consent of the Christians, who, though they be not descended of Abraham, and do not observe the greatest part of the laws of Moses, yet do not cease highly to defend this truth throughout the world, the Gospel in their sense being nothing else but the literal accomplishment of that promise, *The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent.* I shall shew, in the sequel of these my Reflections, with how much justice they assent to this truth; but at present I confine myself only to the testimonies of the Jews, and that which confirms the authority thereof.

CHAP. VI.

That the Book of Genesis, could not be forged under the name of Moses.

I SHOULD never have done, should I go about to set down all the observations which might be made in comparing this book of Genesis with other histories commonly known to the world, and whose faithfulness is unquestionable. Without entering upon this comparison, we may boldly assert, that there is no history in the world whose author we can be so sure of, as that Moses was the author of Genesis.

But I go further, and assert, that the Jews could

not be mistaken in the testimonies they give to this truth; which I prove by these two remarks.

The first is, That their observations, both civil and religious, are at this day founded upon no other principles than those which we find in Genesis: as for instance, they compute the beginning of their day from the preceding evening, they keep the sabbath, they observe circumcision, they abstain from eating the muscle which is in the hollow of the thigh, &c. The observation of which laws is indeed prescribed to them in the other books of Moses; but the occasion and ground of them all is no where to be found but in Genesis, to which all these laws have a natural relation.

The second is, That the book of Genesis taking for granted, that the posterity of Abraham, as well as his ancestors, had always observed the sabbath and circumcision; and the books of Moses ordering the same to be constantly read in every family, to which the sabbath-day was more peculiarly appropriated, and the whole to be read over every seventh year, as we know the Jews' practice was, according to the law of Moses; the first of which injunctions they practise still in all places, and have left off the other, only because they cannot do it now they are out of their own land; I say, supposing all this, it is absolutely impossible that any other than Moses could have made this book to be received.

The forgery, at the beginning, would have been palpable, even to children themselves: as for example, let us suppose that Solomon had formed a design of deceiving the people, in publishing the book of Genesis for a book of Moses; is it possible he should so far impose on his people, as to make them to receive the said book all at once, as that which had been constantly read in their families every seventh day, and year, and that for six hundred years before his time? And therefore, as a book that had been so

long in all their families, though indeed it was never heard of by them before that time.

If an impostor can create a belief in others, that he hath some secret communication with the Deity, those who are thus persuaded by him, will easily submit themselves to his laws; but it is absolutely impossible that a whole people should all at once forget whatsoever they have learned or heard of their parents or forefathers, and instead thereof admit of tales forged at pleasure.

Some nations have been so ridiculous, to derive themselves from a fabulous original; but they never fell into such mistakes about those things which were at no great distance from the time in which they lived.

Besides, we know that these fabulous originals never made so lively an impression upon the minds of a whole nation, especially the learned amongst them, as generally to be believed; but we rather find, that they have endeavoured to reconcile them to truth, by shewing something else was hinted thereby, as we may see by the explication the heathens themselves have given us of all their fables, and utterly rejected those which they could not reconcile to good sense.

But in this case we find a whole nation to this very day maintaining all the matters of fact related in Genesis, and in particular that of the creation, as of matters whose memorial they have constantly celebrated every seventh day, since the time they first happened.

Lastly, It cannot be denied but that this book was constantly used to be read amongst the Jews, especially on the sabbath-day, and that under the name of Moses: for instance, since the time of Jesus Christ, or since that of David; neither can it be denied, but this constant reading was observed by virtue of a law contained in the said book. Now if this law has always been in this book from the first appearing of it, which cannot be questioned, how was it possible to forge and foist in this book under the name

of Moses, the founder of the Jewish government! I say, this book, which besides all this, contains such extraordinary matters, and is the very foundation of all their religion.

I will not repeat here what I mentioned in the third chapter, to make the vanity of those men appear, who imagine the book of Genesis, and the four that follow it, might have been forged by others, under Moses's name: yet I think I ought, before I proceed further, to remove a seeming difficulty, which is often alleged by this sort of people, for, say they, it cannot be that these books were ever read with that care and constancy we speak of, because a time can be pointed at, wherein the said book was wholly unknown in the kingdom of Judah and indeed, the history plainly informs us, that the book of the law was found again in the reign of Josias; from whence they infer that, if it were then unknown, it might as well be forged.

But indeed they may conclude from hence, that which willingly we allow them, that there was a time wherein ungodliness did prevail, and idolatry was publicly established in the kingdom of Judah itself, yet can they not from this instance draw any other consequence which might support their pretensions.

They must needs acknowledge first, that the books of Moses were not only amongst the three tribes, but also amongst the ten, since the time of their revolt under Rehoboam; that they who were carried by Salmanasar into the land of Assyria, had the said books amongst them, as well as those of the ten tribes who were left in their own country. Thus we see, that when the king of *Assyria* sent some of the priests of *Samaria* to instruct the colony which he had settled in their country, in the law of God, it is not said that those priests went to borrow the law of Moses from them of Judah, nor that the said law was altogether unknown in that country; but only that

they had formerly violated the law of God, in serving strange gods, as they still did; but that, withal, they kept the law of God, which to this day is yet found among their posterity.

Secondly, It is evident that, though the wickedness and violence of Manasseh caused a great change in matters of religion, yet not so great but that his subjects notwithstanding had still the books of Moses amongst them, the blood which he shed in Jerusalem was an evident sign that there were some godly men left amongst them, who continued true to their religion, and observed the laws of God. Besides, if we consider his repentance, we must conclude, that towards the end of his reign he did in some degree re-establish the purity of that religion he had before profaned, a main part of which was the expounding and reading of the books of Moses, according to those laws before mentioned.

In the third place it is visible, that the reason why Hilkiah, having found the book of the law in the temple as they were cleansing and repairing it, sent the same to Josiah, was not because there was no other such book left in Judah, but because the said book being written by the hand of Moses himself, there seemed to be something very extraordinary in the finding of it at that very time when they were endeavouring a reformation; and it was this circumstance which did in a more particular manner excite the zeal of this good prince. And indeed, if we suppose that Josiah had never before seen the book of the law, how could he have applied himself to the reforming of his country, his people, and the temple, in the manner which is recorded in the book of Kings? How could a sufficient number of copies of it be dispersed over all his kingdom in an instant, to inform the people about the ceremonials of the passover, which soon after was so solemnly celebrated by them? Or, how is it possible that the Levites, the priests, and people, could have been all of the sudden

instructed in all the points to be observed in the performing of that holy solemnity.

It is apparent, that the sacred Historian did for no other reason take notice of this circumstance, that the book found was of Moses's own hand writing, but to make it appear that their devout respect for this book was not wholly stifled, as having been by them carefully hid from the fury of their idolatrous kings, and laid up in some secret place of the temple, where now they had so happily found it again.

Over and above what hath been said already, we are to observe, that how great soever the wickedness of the kings of Judah and Israel was, as well as that of their subjects, yet the same generally consisted in nothing else but the imitation of the worship of their neighbour nations, as to some particulars, which though they were forbid by the law, yet they left the far greater part of their religion in full force. This we have an instance of in the time of Ahab, where we find Elijah reproaching the Israelites with the monstrous alliance they had made betwixt the worship of God and that of Baal, which queen Jesabel had introduced.

All this clearly proves, that the book of Genesis, which is the first of the books of Moses, was never forged under his name, since it was always owned as the writing of that famous author, and is still so acknowledged by the Jews at this day.

CHAP. VII.

That it appears from Genesis, that the Sabbath was constantly observed from the Beginning of the World until Moses.

THE other objection of the Atheists (supposing that Moses was the author of Genesis, as we have now proved) is this, that it seems absurd to give credit to the relations of a person who lived so many ages distant from the things he recites. To answer this objection, we must first of all declare to them, by what means the memory of the fact which Moses relates was preserved so lively and entire as to give Moses so distinct a knowledge of them, and that it was not in his power to forge or add any thing of his own, it being a thing known to the whole world as well as himself.

There is no way whereby we can more solidly evince that it is impossible the creation of the world should be forged by Moses, than by making it appear, that the law of the sabbath hath a natural relation to the creation of the world, and that it hath been always constantly observed from that time until Moses. The same also will help us clearly to conceive after what manner the memory of the promise of the Messiah hath been preserved so distinct amongst those that lived since the creation until Moses. We are no sooner informed that the sabbath is a solemn day, ordained at first to celebrate and perpetuate the memory of the creation, but we judge it impossible that so important an event, commemorated every seventh day, by virtue of a Divine law, should be an imposture. But forasmuch as this impossibility is grounded on these two propositions; the one, that God gave this law of the sabbath to the first man; the other, that the same was observed by his

posterity ever since, till the time of Moses, and that God only renewed it in the law given from mount Sinai: these are the truths I am now to clear; and it is of more importance to be proved, because though the generality of authors, ancient and modern, Jews as well as Christians, are of this opinion, yet there are some of the Christian fathers who seem to deny that the sabbath was ever observed by the Patriarchs. But it will be an easy matter to prove from Moses, that the antiquity of the sabbath is such as I assert, and at the same time to demonstrate the truth of the creation, as well as of the promise of the Messiah, which in a manner immediately followed it.

Moses, in the second chapter of Genesis, expresses himself thus: *And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because that in it he had rested from all his work which he had created*:* which words clearly evince a solemn consecration of the seventh day to God's service, by it being made a commemoration of his finishing the creation of the heavens and the earth.

But because it may be said, that the intent of Moses in this place was only to set down the reason why God set apart this day, of all others, to his service, by the law at mount *Sinai*, we are to take notice, that this appointment was made for man's sake, already placed in the garden of *Eden*. This we may gather from the order Moses observes: for he sets down first the formation of man on the sixth day, and his being placed in Paradise, of which he gives a more particular account in the second chapter; and after these, he relates God's resting from his works, and the consecration of the sabbath, with the reason of that law which he imposed on man; and then adds, *These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth, when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the heaven and the*

* Gen. ii. 3.

earth. All that precedes these words, is only a relation of what passed in the seven first days; and that which Moses sets down concerning God's blessing of the seventh day, and his consecrating it, ought as well to be accounted a law appointing the seventh day for his service, as those other blessings given to the creatures according to their kinds, are acknowledged as inviolable laws of God, by virtue whereof they subsist, and are perpetuated, each according to their kind, by the way of generation.

In the second place, it is very remarkable that the Patriarchs maintained a public worship, at least since the time of Seth; which it was necessary should be determined to some certain day; and since we find that even at this time they distinguished between beasts clean and unclean, with respect to their sacrifices, (which they could not do but from revelation) we have much more reason to conclude that God had set apart a time for his own worship and service.

And, indeed, there are many evident signs, that even then the seventh day was observed.* I will not here preremptorily assert that ancient tradition of the Jews which tells us, that the ninety-second Psalm, whose title is *a Psalm for the Sabbath*, was made by Adam himself, who was made on the evening of the sabbath: but this I dare assert, that it is apparent, that what we read in the eighth chapter of Genesis,† about the deluge, doth refer to this custom where we find Noah sending forth the dove and the raven on the seventh day, which plainly hints to us his observing of that day; for it seems, that Noah having an in especial manner, on that solemn day, implored the assistance of God in the assembly of his family, he expected a particular blessing from it.

And we cannot but make some reflection on that which we read in the xxixth of Genesis concerning the term of a week set apart to the nuptials of Leah,

* *Kimchi Præfat. in Psalmos.* † Gen. viii. 10, 12.

where, at the twenty-seventh verse, Laban thus expresses himself: *Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also, for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years.** This week doth here so plainly signify a week of days, that it cannot be more naturally expressed; and, indeed, all generally understand by this week of the marriage-feast of Leah, that term of time which in succeeding ages hath been customary to allot to nuptial festivals, as appears from the book of Esther, where the wedding feast of Vashti lasted seven days; this term of seven days having so long since been consecrated to nuptial rejoicings.

The same we may also gather from the time which was ordinarily allotted to mourning for the dead; to which we find the Patriarchs allotted a term proportioned to that of their rejoicing. For as we see that the Egyptians mourned ten weeks for Jacob, because of his quality, as being the father of Joseph; so we find that Joseph, and those that accompanied him, mourned seven days at his interment in the land of Canaan: and as we find, that this custom was perpetually afterwards observed by the Jews, as appears from Ecclesiasticus xxii. 12. so likewise we find the same observed by the Asiatics, as may be seen in the history of Ammianus Marcellinus, at the beginning of his nineteenth book; and from them it passed to the Christians, as we find in St. Ambrose.†

Thirdly, it appears from Exod. vii. 25. that God observed seven days‡ after he had smote the river to change the waters thereof into blood; from whence the Jews conclude, that the three plagues, viz. that of blood, of frogs, and of lice, abode on the land of Egypt six days, and were withdrawn on the seventh, which is the sabbath.

* Gen. xxix. 27. † *De fide Resur. in obitu Sat.* p. 321.

‡ Seven days were fulfilled after that the Lord had smote the river. Jalkut. in h. l.

We may also gather, if we calculate the time exactly, that the Jews in Egypt observed the sabbath. We find from the history of their departure out of *Egypt*, that the same happened on a Thursday, being the fifteenth of the month Nisan; and the day in which they sung those hymns of deliverance, was the sabbath which God had particularly set apart for this week.

It is also evident from Exod. xvi. that the keeping of the sabbath was observed by the Israelites, before the law was given on mount *Sinai*. For we find God speaking there concerning the sabbath, not as of a thing newly instituted, but as of an ancient law, which they were not to transgress by gathering the manna on that day; for he orders them to gather a double portion the sixth day, and not to gather any on the seventh. We see that the Israelites resting on the seventh day is here supposed a known and customary thing, prescribed to them by a law of old.

They who went forth to gather manna on the seventh day are represented as transgressors of a known law, as appears from the words of the Lord to Moses. *How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?* Moses also speaks of the sabbath, which was to be the next day, as of a thing customary, and received amongst them. *To-morrow* (saith he, at v. 23.) *is the rest of the sabbath of holiness unto the Lord;* words which would have been unintelligible to the Israelites, and expressed a law altogether impracticable, in case they had been destitute of any further knowledge concerning it, and had not been acquainted that it was the very day in which the great work of creation had been finished.

My fourth observation I take from the very words of the Decalogue, where first of all we find God speaking in this manner, *Remember the sabbath day:** which words clearly import, that the law he

* Exod. xx. 8.

gave, was not a new law, but indeed as old as the world, and which had been observed by their forefathers. It seems probable also that God expresses himself in these terms, because the tyranny of Pharaoh had forced them to break this law, by obliging them to deliver their tale of bricks every day, without excepting the sabbath, which before he had allowed them to keep.

This is explained very distinctly in the fifth of Exodus, and seems to have been the occasion of Moses's demanding straw of Pharaoh for the Israelites to go and sacrifice: in answer to which demand, Pharaoh* expresses himself in terms which shew that formerly they had observed a rest on that day: however it be, yet thus much is apparent, that God commands them to make their bond servants to observe the sabbath, because the Egyptians, by their example, inclined them not to be very careful in exempting them from all labour on that day.

Moreover in the second place, we are to take notice, that in the last words of the fourth commandment, God speaks of it as of a thing formerly appointed and determined by him, saying, *For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and rested the seventh day, wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it;* which words have a manifest and undeniable reference to that which happened the seventh day after the creation, and to the law then given to man concerning it.

We may gather from the fourth chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, that the sense which we have put upon the third verse of the second of Genesis, is the same which the Jews have always had of it. The Apostle, discoursing from those words of David, Psa. xcv. *To whom I sware in my wrath, that they should not enter into my rest*, doth suppose a threefold rest; the first of which is the rest of the sabbath,

* Exod. v. 5.

of which mention is made in the second of Genesis, where we have the first institution of it; the second was the rest in the land of *Canaan* promised to the Jews upon their enduring all those trials in the wilderness; the third, the rest in heaven, of which the two foregoing were but the figures. He argues therefore that these words of David could not be understood concerning the sabbath-day, forasmuch as from the beginning of the world men entered into that rest of the sabbath; and he proves this, by that passage in Genesis of which he only cites the first words, viz. that *God rested the seventh day from all his works;* as supposing that the Jews, to whom he wrote, had no need of having the following words quoted to them, which tells us, that *God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it:* that is, he consecrated the same to his worship and service, forasmuch as nothing was more publicly and universally known amongst them, the observation of the sabbath being a thing generally received, even before the giving of the law.

And, indeed, though Philo the Jew be of opinion that the practice of solemnizing that day had suffered some interruption, and that for this reason the law of the sabbath was given to Moses, yet it is well known first of all, that Aristobulus the Peripatetic*, in a treatise dedicated by him to Ptolemy, surnamed Philadelphus, cites several passages of Homer, Hesiod, and Linus, heathen poets, which mention the seventh day as a festival and solemn day, because all things were finished in the same.

In the next place, it is notorious, that if some of the fathers, as Justin Martyr, and Tertullian writing against the Jews, have denied that the Patriarchs observed the seventh day, they did so rather with regard to the rigour of that law which forbad all

* Euseb. præp. Evang. l. 13. c. 12.

manner of work on that day upon pain of death, (which was superadded by God to the first law of the sabbath) than to the observation of the sabbath, as it was a day appointed to make a solemn commemoration of the creation of the world.

In a word, we are to take notice, that the difference which God makes between the sabbath observed by the Patriarchs, and that which he appointed to the Jews, did consist in two things. First, in that God did impose an absolute necessity upon the Jews to abstain from all manner of work, even to the very dressing of meat, necessary for the support of life: we find this distinction clearly expressed in the law which God gave concerning the first and seventh day of the feast of unleavened bread; for he absolutely forbids all manner of work on these two days, as much as on the sabbath, even the preparing of necessary food, which he permits the five other days, forbidding only servile laborious works.

Secondly, In that the working on that day by the law is made punishable with death, which was not so before; which innovation, and new rigour of the law, established by God, was authorised by the punishing of him who had gathered sticks on the sabbath-day; whereas we find, that before the law was given upon mount *Sinai*, God did not command those Jews to be punished with death, who went forth the seventh day to gather manna, according to their ancient custom of dressing their meat on that day.

Let me add this further, that though the Apostles had abolished the rigour of the law concerning the sabbath, introduced by Moses, yet they themselves observed it; which practice of theirs, in all probability, gave occasion to the Christians, for almost four centuries, to keep the sabbath as well as the first day of the week, solemnizing both those days, the one as a commemoration of the creation of the world,

and the other of the resurrection of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

But whatever judgment may be passed on this last remark, it is very evident from Genesis and Exodus, —first, that the law of the sabbath was observed before Moses: secondly, that this observation was by the first Patriarchs propagated among the heathens also, as well as the idea of the creation; or as the practice of sacrificing, with the other parts of religious worship, the original whereof may be seen in the book of Genesis, as we shall make appear in our following discourse.

After all this, we must conclude against the Atheist, that either Moses must have imprudently laid a snare for himself, in forging a matter of fact of which not only the Jews, but all the world, were able to convince him, since there were none amongst them but must needs be conscious whether they had observed the sabbath in commemoration of the creation, as he relates it, or no; or else, that the creation of the world, being a matter of fact so generally known, and the memorial of it solemnized every seventh day by all those who preceded him, must needs be an uncontested and immovable truth, which I shall farther evince by those observations which I shall raise from the dependence and connection which the matters related by Moses in Genesis have with the creation of the world, and the promise of the Messiah. This is my business at present; in performing of which I shall make it appear, that nothing can be imagined more rational and coherent than the relations of Moses, in which the Atheists imagine that they discover so great absurdities.

CHAP. VIII.

That Adam was convinced of his Creation, by Reason and Authority.

THOUGH it might be thought more natural, in these our disquisitions about the history of Genesis, to begin with those matters which happened near the time of Moses, and from them to pass to those at a greater distance; yet I have chosen rather to follow the thread of Moses's discourse, hoping that this method will afford more light to these our Reflections; at least, it will spare me the trouble of frequent repetitions, which in the other way I should be necessarily obliged to. I begin then with this, *That Adam was convinced of his Creation, both by Reason and Authority.*

The creation of Adam being a thing of that nature, that he must first be convinced of it himself, before he could persuade his posterity to entertain the belief of it, it is worth our inquiry to know what ways he had to assure himself that he was indeed created in that manner as Moses relates. And, forasmuch as the certainty of this tradition depends upon the authority of Adam, whom Moses supposes to have been the first deliverer of it, it is plain that we must be assured that Adam could not deceive himself in this matter, as it is evident enough that he would not deceive his children, when he took care to instruct them concerning it.

As to his own existence, he could not but be as strongly persuaded of it as we are of ours, all the difficulty lying in the manner how he came to exist. Now, there were two ways by which Adam might inform himself of this, viz. by reason, and the testimony of authority. He could easily find out this secret by a rational reflection; or, he might also be

persuaded of it by God himself, who had created him, not to mention now any information which he might have from the angels who were witnesses of his creation.

It appears that Adam, whose tradition Moses has recorded, supposes that he had learnt of God himself the manner of his own formation. God speaks to Adam, and sanctifies the seventh day; that is, obliges Adam to keep the memorial of his creation; he ties him, by a law, to commemorate his creation fifty-two times a year, and to render him continual thanks for the being he had received.

But, forasmuch as Adam was capable of making reflections upon those several matters which God had made known to him concerning his creation, I say, it cannot be imagined, but that he must have taken these things into consideration, and have been convinced of the truth of them by the light of reason.

The truth of a relation consisting in its conformity with the matter related, it appears clearly that Adam could certainly know the truth of what God had declared to him, by examining the things themselves.

We may distinguish several propositions in the revelation God made to him concerning the manner of his creation.

The first was, That his body was taken from the earth.

The next, That his soul was not framed before his body.

The third, That his soul had been joined to his body, to constitute one individual person.

The fourth, That he was created in a full and perfect age.

The fifth, That his wife was formed of a rib, taken out of his side, during the time that he was cast into a deep sleep.

These are the truths I propose as instances, the rather because there is not one of them of which Adam himself could be a witness.

And yet I affirm, there is none of these which he could not be assured of by the light of reason, being convinced of them by the same means which assured him of the existence of his soul and body. The consideration therefore of these two matters was of good use to confirm the revelation which God had vouchsafed him concerning his creation, of which he could not be a witness himself.

That his body was taken from the earth, Adam might easily infer from the food that maintained it; for what is the matter of man's nourishment, but a digested and disguised earth? And finding himself, at first, in a perfect estate, it was natural for him to judge that his body had been thus at once framed of the earth, without passing those several degrees of growth whereby children arrive to their just stature.

And he might as easily be assured, that his soul was not formed before his body. The soul is a being conscious of his own operations and thoughts; wherefore he needed only make this reflection: *My soul has had neither knowledge nor thoughts before it was united to my body; therefore my soul did not exist before it.* No great study was required to make so natural a conclusion as this is.

Again, how could he be ignorant of the union of his soul with the body? Was it not obvious for him to be assured hereof, by the ready obedience which he saw his body yield unto his soul? He had the idea of a tree, as well as the idea of his foot or arm; whence it was easy for him to reflect thus; *How comes it to pass, that I command my feet and my arms, and that I cannot do the same to a stone or tree, though I have the idea of the one as well as of the other?* Must not this proceed from a nearer union it hath with the one than with the other? He knew that this union continued during his sleep, and was independent of his will. In a word, he had the same proofs of this union, which we have of it at present; only they were in him much more lively,

because our infancy makes us in some sort ignorant of the nature of our souls, our souls accustoming themselves, by little and little, to depend upon the senses, so as not to be able to raise themselves, without some trouble, above their operations.

Neither was it less evident to Adam, that he was produced at a perfect age. He saw that his food maintained life, and he knew assuredly, that he had not taken any but very lately: how then could he attain to that stature without that help? Or how was it that he found himself now ready to faint, if he deferred to take it, which formerly he had not felt the want of? These reflections made it unquestionable to him that he was formed in a perfect age.

And lastly, it was yet more easy for him to be persuaded of the truth of God's revelation concerning the forming of Eve: he needed but to count his own ribs and those of his wife; for he could not find one less in himself than in his wife, without being fully satisfied in that matter.

These propositions, with many others of like nature, being such as the truth of which Adam could be assured, by making reflection either on himself, or on plants, or living creatures, greatly confirming his belief in the Divine testimony concerning his creation, we may easily infer, that Adam could not deceive himself about that matter.

CHAP. IX.

That Adam was confirmed, by his own Experience, in the Persuasion he had entertained concerning his Creation.

WHEN I take for granted that Adam could satisfy himself concerning the truth of God's revelation, by some natural and easy reflections, I do not find how any can think strange of this hypothesis; except some, perchance, might think that I make Adam too contemplative.

But if any will be pleased to make these following observations, they will justify me, that I have attributed nothing to him but what agrees exactly with his character.

The first is, That Adam finding himself, immediately upon his creation, at his full and perfect age, he was void of those prejudices which the ignorance and weakness of his infancy are the cause of; his mind was not tainted with popular errors, which oft are so great a hindrance to the knowledge of truth: he had not yet received any ill impression; and when afterwards he was so credulous as to give way to a temptation, his experience proved a most powerful means to inform his reason, and withdraw him from his error.

Besides, we suppose here, that the Divine testimony which acquainted him with the particular circumstances of his creation, was precedent to the reflections Adam made, and indeed was the cause of them. If we suppose some countryman, not capable of discovering of himself, all on a sudden, the manner how such a thing came to pass, yet this is certain, that his reason alone will be able to satisfy him whether the thing happened in that manner which the

relation of it imports; he need but consult the rules of probability, to be determined in this matter.

Adam had not only the advantage of being formed at a perfect age, of being acquainted, by the mouth of God himself, about the creation of the world, &c. and of living so many ages, which gave him leisure enough to consider the probability of what God had revealed to him, to examine the grounds and certainty of it, and, in a word, to judge whether the said reflections were to be rejected as fabulous, or to be relied on as of most certain and evident truth; but over and above all this, Adam could rationally assure himself of the manner how the things (which he had not seen) were done, by the experience he had of other matters which were comprehended in the Divine revelation.

The manner how his body had been formed of the earth, was, I confess, a thing difficult to be conceived; but the production of an infant like to himself, by the way of generation, which he afterwards was assured of by experience, was sufficient to confirm his mind in the belief of the Divine revelation; the way of generation being at least as much, if not more difficult to comprehend, as the manner of his creation.

We have great reason to suppose that, as it was Adam's duty, so he did really make those reflections I have attributed to him, if we consider that God gave him a law proportioned to the state in which he was created; for this law supposes that Adam owned himself God's subject, that he considered God as his great benefactor, that he hoped for rewards from him, and feared to be punished by him.

And lastly, if I should grant that these reflections did not at first make so deep an impression in his heart, yet at least it cannot be denied, but that after his fall he was in a manner necessitated to meditate on these truths. God appeared to him in a visible manner; God passed sentence upon him, his wife, and the serpent; God condemned the serpent, and

afforded his grace to man; God made him a promise proportioned to the evil into which he was fallen. The woman had deceived her husband, which did naturally tend to disunite them; but God uniting himself again with Adam, made the effect of his promise to depend upon Adam's reunion with his wife, having assured him that the offspring of his wife should be his Redeemer. God threatened the woman with extreme pains in child-bearing; he drave them out of the garden of *Eden*, aad placed a flame of fire to guard the entrance there.

All this, without doubt, would never suffer Adam slightly to pass over matters of so great importance as his creation, and the manner of his being formed out of the earth. Things being thus stated, it is easy to judge whether we have supposed Adam too subtle and contemplative, by attributing to him the aforesaid reflection.

CHAP. X.

That the Children of Adam had reason to be convinced of the Creation.

IT is apparent, that soon as the children of Adam were arrived to years of understanding, they were in a condition to make reflections on the manner of their production, according to the information received of their parents. They were able to compare the twofold original of man: the one, in which the body was immediately taken from the earth; the other, in which it was produced by generation; and were able to judge if either of them were improbable; and in particular, whether the formation of their parents, with other matters consequent, and depending on it, could be sufficiently proved and confirmed.

For it was easy for them to judge, that their pa-

rents, of whose tenderness and care they had so great experience, could not have had the least design to deceive them in what they had delivered to them concerning the creation. They had also leisure enough, during the long lives they enjoyed, to examine the solidity of those reasons which persuaded their parents of the truth of their creation.

For instance, they could easily inform themselves whether there were any more men and women than their father and mother, that had been before them; whether they were produced from the earth, or by a fortuitous concourse of atoms; whether there were any other language besides that which they spake; whether there were any ruins of buildings, or other remains, which signified that arts had been formerly cultivated; and in a word, whether there were any reason to persuade them, that the world had not its beginning at the time which their parents assigned for it.

Neither were they only in a condition to judge of the truth of these things: but their senses were able to convince them of it; as, for instance, by seeing the first trees, the production of others from them, and the different degrees of their growth.

But besides all this, they could experience most of these things in their own persons; they could know whether God had assigned to man the fruit of trees, and grain for their food, as Moses has recorded, only by examining their own mouths, which were formed to chew fruits, and not to tear the raw flesh of animals, which require sharper and stronger sets of teeth than those they found themselves provided with, the eating of flesh not being introduced till after the deluge.

Thus, after the act of generation, they saw their children born, as it was represented to them that they themselves had been formed.

They had also before their eyes sensible signs of the truth of the matters related to them: as, for instance, the continual miracle of a flame of fire,

which kept them from entering into Paradise, was a certain argument of the first sin, of which they had not been eye-witnesses.

The pains of a woman in child-bearing did the more confirm the truth of the Divine sentence, because it was not obvious for them to apprehend such consequences from an act which was pleasing to their sensual appetites.

And lastly, Forasmuch as they kept a solemn day, to celebrate the memory of the world's nativity, on which seventh day their parents repeated to them no less than two and fifty times a year the same thing, informing them of the manner of their formation; it is impossible to suppose that they should let these things pass without making any reflection on the truth of them, and the rather because we cannot rationally conceive that they should have been serious in any duties of religion, without having first examined the truth of the creation, and of the promise of a Redeemer, which are the true grounds of all religious acts whatsoever.

CHAP. XI.

That the Children of Adam were actually convinced of the Truth of the Creation, and the Promise of the Messiah.

I SUPPOSE it is sufficiently evident that the immediate posterity of Adam could easily be assured of the manner how their parents had been produced, from whom they derived their beings. They could likewise be fully satisfied about the truth of their sin, and the promise God had made them, *That one of their posterity should destroy the enemy of mankind.*

My business therefore next, is to shew that they were actually assured of the truth of these matters: this will appear, if we consider two things.

The first is, that as these matters were the chief objects of their meditation, because of their extraordinary importance, so it is evident that they acted as persons fully satisfied of the truth of them.

The other is, that as they had been instructed in these truths by their parents, so they delivered the same to their posterity, to whom they transmitted the belief of these matters, as of things altogether unquestionable.

I say then, that they acted as those who were fully assured of the truth of these matters, which appears throughout the whole course of their lives, not only when they did that which was good, but when they were overtaken with sin; and this alone, methinks, is sufficient to evidence the deep impression the belief of the creation, and the promise of the Messiah, had made on their hearts.

Sacrifices are acts of religious worship; and this custom therefore of sacrificing, which we find amongst the Children of Adam, was an evident mark of their piety; and this their religious inclination was, without doubt, the effect of their being persuaded of the truth of the creation, and first promise.

The sin of Cain in killing his brother shews the same persuasion: the Divine oracle, *the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head*, being expressed in very general terms, was applicable either to the first son of Eve, or to his posterity; or else to some other who might be called her seed, because born from one of her posterity.

It is natural for us to pass from one meaning to another, when we are in search for the true sense of such *general propositions* as these. Now it appears from the name which Eve gave to Cain, that she took the words of this oracle in the first sense, that is, she looked upon Cain to be the son that had been promised her, as appears from her own words. *I have* (saith she) *gotten a man from the Lord.**

* Gen. iv. 1.

And it cannot be doubted, that being in this opinion herself, she was not wanting to cherish and flatter this hope in her son, that he was to fulfil the first prophecy or Divine oracle: neither is it any whit stranger to suppose this, than to imagine that Mandane did instil into her son Cyrus aspiring thoughts for the empire of Asia, from the dream of his father Astyages, which she looked upon as a divine foreboding.

When we read therefore that Cain slew his brother, seeing him preferred of God by a very distinguishing mark in the act of their sacrificing, through the jealousy and hatred he had conceived against him, may we not very naturally conclude from thence, that as he had never doubted of the truth of the promise, so he could not endure to see another come, to dispute his pretensions of being the fulfiller of that first oracle.

A like reflection we may make upon the name which Eve gave to Seth; and indeed the Jews, in their ancient commentaries on Genesis, lead us to it: *She called his name Seth, for God* (said she) *has appointed me another seed.** R. Tanchuman, following the notion of R. Samuel, saith, That she had regard to that seed which was to proceed from another, or a strange place; and what seed is that? saith he. It is the King, the Messiah.

I pretend not to maintain the solidity of the reflections they make upon the words, *another seed.* They seem rather to have pleased themselves in sporting with a word which admits of both significations, *other* and *strange*, than to give us an exact and distinct notion of the importance of that word. Thus much, at least, we cannot deny, but that Eve considering her son Seth as him whom God had given her instead of Abel, she could do no less than acquaint him with her hopes; and indeed, this information was that which not only disposed Seth and his posterity for

* Rabboth, fol. 27. col. 2. par. 23. & *alibi.*

piety and the spirit of religion, but did also in a particular manner incline them to separate from the race of Cain, as from those whom God had bereft of the right of fulfilling the first oracle, to which naturally they might pretend.

It appears from the example of Enoch, that the children of Adam lived in the exercise of religious worship: and we know that the said worship supposeth the creation of the world, and promise of the Messiah, and that all the acts of religion are employed either in commemorating these truths every seventh day, or in unfolding the wonders therein contained, or in testifying our thankfulness to God for the same.

We may add here that the instance of Lamech's *polygamy* does in some sort make out to us the force of this persuasion.

Cain being rejected by God, and distinguished by an exemplary punishment, for killing his brother Abel, it is evident that no man could any longer interpret that promise in the first sense, by applying it to Adam's first son, or his posterity. This being so plain, as none could be ignorant of it, it was natural therefore to seek for another meaning of that promise, and to place the fulfilling of it in a posterity at a greater distance, or more numerous.

And indeed so it happened; for the exemplary punishment which God inflicted on Cain during the seven first generations, according to those words, That *he should be punished sevenfold*, made his posterity apprehend, that God (for the sin he had committed) had justly debarred him of the right he might otherwise have had of fulfilling the promise.

But yet at the same time they conceived also, that this right, which belonged more properly to the eldest or first-born than to the younger brothers, was now to return to his posterity after the seventh generation; and in this view it seems, that Lamech affected polygamy, as if by multiplying his posterity he had hoped

to see that promise fulfilled by some one or other of them.

It cannot be denied but that he imitated the crimes of Cain, and therefore may well be supposed to have been leavened also with his false maxims. But how greatly soever he was corrupted, yet forasmuch as he had been educated in the hopes of his father, and in converse with the family of Seth, who many ages before had formed public assemblies for religious exercises, we cannot well imagine but that he must have had the same pretensions.

It appears therefore that the polygamy of Lamech may justly be esteemed an effect of his misapprehensions concerning the sense of the first promise; those means which he conceived most likely, he made choice of, to give him a share in the fulfilling of that promise which pointed at a son to be born. So that the irregularity he was guilty of in marrying two wives at the same time, may pass for a proof of his being persuaded not only of the promise, *That the seed of the woman should break the serpent's head*, but also of the creation of the world.

It seems that, according to these principles, we may give a very plausible account, as well of those violences which were exercised in the old world, and of their strong inclinations to sensuality, as of those alliances between the family of Seth and that of Cain, which did not happen till seven generations after Cain; that is to say, at a time when the family of Cain pretended to be restored again to his ancient right, from which he had been suspended during seven generations: the family of Seth, by these alliances with the family of Cain, seeming desirous to secure their hopes and pretensions. It will not be thought strange that I look upon the jealousy of Cain towards his brother (as thinking himself supplanted by him of his right to accomplish the promise,) and the polygamy of Lamech, as an effect of this persuasion, if it be considered, that in all likelihood this belief was more

strong at the beginning of the world, the idea of the promise being more fresh and lively in the minds of men, as a thing at no great distance from those times; and that we find in the holy family in general, manifold instances of this spirit of jealousy, and burning desire of a posterity.

We find also, much about the same time, another Lamech, the father of Noah,* declaring by the name he gave his son, the hopes he had that he might probably be the person who was to comfort mankind concerning all the misery sin had brought into the world.

Thus it appears clearly, that for above sixteen ages, from the creation of the world to the deluge, we find in all the actions of the children of Adam a strong impression of the belief of the creation of the world, and the promise of the Messiah: and till this time we find not the least instance which might seem to convince the relation of Moses of the least absurdity. We see men acting from the persuasion of these two matters of fact; we must conclude therefore, that they were distinctly informed of them: yea, we see all men in general acting according to this persuasion; it is evident therefore they were known to all; and the weekly observance of the sabbath-day continually representing those truths to the eyes and minds of all, takes away all possibility of forgery in the matters.

Let us now inquire whether after the deluge these ideas were effaced; or, whether they have not exerted the same efficacy in the spirit of Noah, and the actions of all his posterity.

* Gen. v. 29.

CHAP. XII.

That Noah was fully persuaded of the Creation of the World, and the Promise of the Messiah.

IF we find that the children of Adam, and their posterity, could be exactly informed of the creation, and the promise of the Messiah, and that indeed they were so, it will follow, that Noah could not be unacquainted with the same truths.

Noah was six hundred years old when the deluge came: he had conversed with Lamech his father, who had seen Adam and his children, as being fifty-six years of age when Adam died; he had conversed with Methusalem his grandfather, who died that very year the flood came, and who, being three hundred and forty-three years old when Adam died, had without doubt instructed Noah during so vast an interval of time, in like manner as himself had been instructed by Adam for many ages.

And as Methusalem had lived a long time with Seth, who died in the year of the world 1042, so it is evident that Noah, who was born in the year 1056, had not only seen Lamech and Methusalem, but many also of their ancestors, whose discourses he heard, examined their traditions, and imitated their way of worship.

Moreover, Noah saw that there were no men in his time who did not deduce their genealogy from Adam: all his contemporaries could convince him of it, every one of them having as exact a knowledge of their ancestors as he could have of his.

Now that this was a matter which they might be easily assured of, appears on these two accounts: the one is, the long life which the men of that age enjoyed; and the other, the short interval of time which was between the creation and the deluge, the

whole amounting only to 1656 years. Adam died in the year 930, and the deluge happened in the 600 year of Noah's life. Adam died 126 years before the birth of Noah: so as Adam must have been seen and known by Methusalem, Lamech, and thousands of others who were contemporaries with Noah.

To these we may add a third remark, and that is, the jealousy and hatred which was between the two families of Cain and Seth: Cain's posterity were altogether corrupted, and the greatest part of Seth's also. Noah, being of the posterity of Seth, had no reason to call those matters in question, which he saw generally owned and received of those to whom their wickedness and crimes suggested objections against them. And I do not know, whether I might not suppose that Noah had before his eyes Paradise, with the cherubims who guarded the entrance thereof, and made it inaccessible; which, if so, was an authentic proof of the truths in question; that garden, as far as we can judge, being not destroyed, nor the guardian angel discharged, till the time of the flood.

Be it as it will, yet Noah, being a man fearing God, was honoured with an extraordinary call to exhort men to repentance; he was commanded to build an ark; he saw the deluge happening, according to what God had foretold; he saw the beasts, of their own accord, gather themselves together, to enter into the ark, in like manner as he had been told that they came to Adam; he saw the deluge cease, according to the Divine declaration; he saw fire from heaven consuming the sacrifice he offered in acknowledgment to God, in like manner as the words of Moses seem to imply that it happened at the sacrifice of Abel; he saw himself chosen in a peculiar manner to be the depositary of the promise which Adam had left to his posterity, though he never had the satisfaction of seeing it fulfilled himself, God having reserved

the accomplishment of it for another time, and to one of his posterity at a great distance.

It is very evident that all these particulars could not but conduce to preserve the memory of these first most important matters of fact of the creation and the promise of the Messiah; and therefore that Noah must of necessity be convinced of the certainty and truth of them. Let us now see whether Noah's offspring had the same persuasion concerning these things.

CHAP. XIII.

That the Children of Noah were convinced of the Truth of these Matters.

THE children of Noah were an hundred years old when the deluge happened, and consequently had conversed a long space of time with Methusalem, and many other of their ancestors and relations of the old world, and had frequented the religious assemblies, observed every sabbath-day in the family of Seth, whence they were descended, and had been instructed there by those who had seen Adam and his posterity: it is evident therefore, beyond all contest, that they could not be ignorant of the creation, and promise of the Messiah.

Now, that they had a distinct knowledge of those matters, we may evidently conclude, not only because they had seen God, when he blessed them, and a second time said to them, as after a new creation, *Increase and multiply*;* nor only upon the account of his giving them a positive law, forbidding them to eat the blood of living creatures,† whose flesh they were permitted to feed on, as he had for-

* Gen. ix. 1. † Gen ix. 5.

bid Adam to eat of the fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden, when he left the rest to their free use: not only for that he had given the rainbow, as a new sign of his covenant with mankind; not only because they had practised those acts of religion to which they had been educated by their parents and ancestors before the deluge: but because the same may be inferred from that action which drew upon Cham his father's curse.

What is the meaning of Cham's deriding the nakedness of his father, and of his father's taking occasion from thence to curse him so solemnly, and that in the person of Canaan his first-born? If it were only a piece of irreverence in the father, what reason had Noah to curse the son on that account? Or was it (as some have supposed) that Canaan had given occasion first to his father's irreverence, by acquainting him with the disorder in which he found his grandfather Noah? Without doubt, there is something more than ordinary in this history. Sure it is, that the account given us of Cham represents him as a profane person, and deeply tinctured with the maxims of Cain and his posterity, and seems to hint to us, that he supposing the promise of the Messiah either frustrated by the death of Abel, or altogether false, he made his father's nakedness the subject of his mockery; who seemed to be incapable of begetting any more children, and therefore incapable of contributing to the accomplishment of the promise of the Messiah, in hopes of which he accounted himself so happy that he had escaped the deluge.

What means it also, that Noah pronounced so terrible a curse against the posterity of Cham by Canaan, who were so far from giving an accomplishment to that promise, that they were in a manner wholly exterminated by Joshua, when God put the posterity of Shem by Abraham in possession of the land of *Canaan?* It is very natural for us to conceive that Noah considered his son Cham's deriding of him, not

only as contrary to the respect which was due to him as a father, but also as the effect of a horrid impiety. which attacked God himself, as making that promise, *The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head*, a subject of raillery.

This reflection upon the action of Cham, and the curse of Noah consequent to it, does appear very natural, if we consider that Noah could not but reflect upon the name his father had given him, and the special favour shewed to him, in being alone preserved of all the posterity of Adam, and consequently the only person in the world by whom this promise was to be fulfilled. At least, it cannot be denied, but that this reflection is as natural as it would have been just, in reference to the fact of cruel Astyages,* if, when he had (as he thought) sufficiently eluded his dream, which presaged the glory of the son of Mandane his daughter, he found her indecently uncovered, and had taken thence occasion to reflect, with his other children, upon a dream which seemed to promise to the son of Mandane the throne of all *Asia*, and threaten the ruin of his own.

It is a thing worth our noting, that in the time of Ezra† the Samaritans had so fresh a memory of Cham's sin, which they supposed to be generally preserved amongst other nations, that in their letter to king Artaxerxes against the Jews who rebuilt *Jerusalem*, they declare, they would not discover the king's nakedness; implying, that they could not consent to the injury he might receive from the Jews in suffering *Jerusalem* to be rebuilt. It is not needful to repeat those other arguments which prove that the children of Noah had reason to be, and were actually as much convinced of the creation and first promise as their ancestors were; for, seeing that these arguments were the very same which their fathers had to persuade themselves of the truth of these things, we had

† Horod, lib. 1. Justin Hist. lib. 1, Valer. Max. lib. 1.

† Ezra iv. 14.

better proceed to the inquiry, whether their posterity that followed them, had the same persuasion they had? which may easily be proved in making some reflections on the following ages, and upon those who descended from Noah and his children.

CHAP. XIV.

That the Posterity of Noah's Children were persuaded of the Truth of the Creation, and first Promise.

If Noah saw Methusalem who had seen Adam and his posterity before the deluge; Abraham saw Shem and his children, who were unquestionable witnesses of what had passed before and since the flood.

Noah dying 350 years after the deluge, it appears that his death happened in the year of the world 2006; so that Noah died only two years before the birth of Abraham, he being born in the year 2008.

Abraham lived 150 years with Shem, who died in the year 2158, and 88 years with Arphaxad the son of Shem, who died in the year 2096; he lived 118 years with Selah son of Arphaxad, who died in the year 2126, and 179 years with Heber the son of Selah, who died in the year 2187.

Isaac being born in the year 2108, might see Shem, Selah, and Heber, who for some hundreds of years had conversed with Noah and his other children; I say, we may suppose him to have conversed with those patriarchs, or at least with those who, being their contemporaries, discoursed of Noah as a man but of yesterday, and from his relation and his children's were informed of the creation of Adam, his fall, the promise of the holy seed, the death of Abel, the miracle of Paradise, the preaching of Noah, the deluge, &c. and who, in obedience to the law of God, observed by their ancestors, did meet together fifty

two times every year, to celebrate the memorial of these wonders, and to teach them to their posterity.

We may take notice of three things here which conduce much to the preservation of a distinct knowledge of these matters.

The first is, That the ark itself might be seen by all the world, as a certain monument of the deluge, and the saving of Noah and his sons.* This monument continued very many ages after Abraham, and was a means to preserve the memory of the deluge amongst the Pagans, as Lucian, to name no more, acquaints us.

The second is, That it was as easy for any of Abraham's contemporaries, as for Abraham, to deduce his genealogy from Noah and his children.

And this was the more easy, because the first division of the world among the three sons of Noah, was followed by another partition amongst their posterity, in the year of the world 1758; a division which gave them a just title of possession to that part of the earth where they were seated; in defence of which, it seems probable that the war of Chedorlaomer (mentioned in the xiiith of Genesis) was undertaken, the family of Cham having invaded the land of *Canaan*, which was part of the inheritance of Shem, as we shall make appear elsewhere.

The third and last thing is, That it was not easy to impose a forgery upon those times, because their lives were yet of a great extent, though inferior to those who lived before the flood.

To these we may add this further consideration, that as the jealousy which was between the family of Seth and Cain was a great means to preserve inviolably the important truths of the creation and first promise; a like jealousy now being arisen among the sons of Noah, Cham being accursed of his own father in the person of Canaan, and the same being propaga-

* De Dea Syra, p. 1060.

ted to their posterity, it could not but effectually contribute to rescue these important truths from oblivion, and particularly the promise of the Messiah, conceived in these words, *The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.*

In a word, we may not only, in reference to the matter in hand, take notice of what Lucian relates concerning the religion of the Assyrians,* which did so lively preserve the memory of the deluge, and of what was done to Noah by his son Cham, when he scoffed at the nakedness of his father;† but also that the god of the Sichemites was called Baalberith, whose symbol was the privy parts of a man, which seems a manifest allusion to their descent from the family of Cham, the Sichemites being some of the posterity of Canaan.

It is also very natural to conceive, first of all, that it was from those old pretensions that the Canaanites took occasion to profane the most holy things with such shameful ideas.

Secondly, That it was in detestation of these ideas, that God ordered the killing of the priests of Baal. And,

Thirdly, That it was for the same reason, that the Jews were commanded to destroy them utterly.

Fourthly, This was also the reason why the Israelites were so often desirous of imitating their crimes.

In the fifth place, as we see that upon the like account of the Moabites and Ammonites took Chemosh for their god, and that the women of those nations were very zealous to propagate their religion, of which we have an instance in Jezabel, the wife of Ahab, so God was also willing to inspire his people with horror and detestation for their religion or any alliance with them.

* Judg. viii. 23. & ix. 8. Talm. Hier. fol. 11. col. 4. & gloss. in h. l. & Avodazara, c. iii. fol. 43. col. 1.

† De Dea Syr. p. 1069.

Lastly, as there does appear a very great conformity and resemblance between the first birth of the world from the first chaos, and its being born again after the deluge; between Adam the first man, and Noah the second; and between the jealousies sprung up in both their families upon the account of the promise of the Messiah; so this conformity could not but very naturally contribute to preserve the memory of those ancient events which Noah and his children had delivered to their posterity with all the care which is taken to preserve the tradition of the fundamentals of religion.

CHAP. XV.

That we find the Family of Abraham, and his Posterity till Jacob, fully persuaded of those Truths.

IT is no less easy to conceive how the distinct knowledge of these truths was in process of time handed down to Jacob and his posterity. This I shall briefly explain.

I need not take notice here, that the religion practised by Abraham and his posterity, suppose these matters as constantly owned and known.

It cannot be denied, but that Lot, having followed Terah and Abraham when God called the latter out of *Chaldea*, might thence suppose, that this heavenly call did separate and distinguish him from the rest of the posterity of Shem, and gave him a right, as well as Abraham, to pretend to the privilege of fulfilling the promise of the Messiah, or at least to see it fulfilled in his posterity. This we may infer from the incest of Lot's daughters: their crime, which in another view appears very monstrous, doth clearly prove, that they were strongly possessed with this hope, which their father had raised in them.

I know that some interpreters suppose,* that they were moved to commit this incest from a pious intention of preserving mankind, as imagining to themselves, that as the deluge had drowned all men, besides Noah and his family, so the flames which destroyed Sodom had consumed all mankind; which they were the more ready to believe, because they might have heard from their father, that the world one day was to perish by fire. But indeed it may be considered as proceeding from a very different motive, the Jewish doctors† plainly averring, that this was done by them in hopes of bringing forth the promised Redeemer.

And if we look upon this action of theirs in this view, with reference to the promise of the Messiah, which was the grand object of the hopes of all those that feared God; it is natural to conceive that considering their father as one whom God had peculiarly chosen from among the posterity of Shem, to execute the promise of the Messiah, and seeing that their mother was changed into a statue of salt, they conceived themselves in some sort authorised to surprise their father in that manner; and the rather, because they conceived on the one hand, that none of the Canaanites (upon whom God had now begun to pour forth so hideous a vengeance, as a beginning of the execution of the curse against Cham) having any part in this chiefest of blessings, could ever marry them, after that God had so manifestly separated and called forth their father from amongst them; and on the other hand, supposing that God would dispense with the irregularity of this action, by reason of their being reduced to an extremity.

There be three circumstances which greatly confirm this my remark upon the motive of their incest.

The first is, That they are represented to us as those who had behaved themselves very chastly, in

* Lyra in Genes. xix. † Beres. Rab. part 23.

the midst of the impurities of *Sodom;* and that besides we find they designed no such thing, till after the death of their mother.

The other is, That we see them contriving the thing together, and that in a matter which naturally is apt to separate the greatest friends, where the motive proceeds from a spirit of uncleanness; nor indeed do we find that they continued in this incest.

The third is, That they were so far from being ashamed of an action in itself so criminal, or concealing the knowledge of it from posterity, that they gave those names to the children born of this their incest, that might perpetuate and divulge the memory of this their action, the one calling her son Moab, as much as to say, *born of my father*, and the other her's Benammi, a name of a like signification with the former.

This observation is very necessary, because these two sons became the heads of two great people, the Moabites and the Ammonites, whose kingdoms lasted above 1300 years, and lived on the borders of the holy land, and were jealous of Abraham and his posterity, as pretending that Abraham could not be chosen before Lot their father, who being the son of Abraham's eldest brother, was to be considered as the first-born of Terah; and who were apt, without doubt, to take it for granted, that if God had brought Abraham out of *Chaldea*, and rescued him from *Ur*, he had in a more peculiar manner saved Lot alone from the conflagration of *Sodom*, by the ministry of angels; and that Abraham and Lot being equally descended from Terah, the right of accomplishing the promise did equally belong to them.

And indeed we find that in all succeeding times these thoughts did predominate with them, as may easily be made out from the history of Balaam.

We see therefore, that the Moabites, who were descended from the eldest daughter of Lot, looked upon the pretensions of the Israelites, that the Mes-

siah was to be born of their seed, in exclusion to all others, with great impatience; and it was for this reason that they sent for Balaam, to decide (by Divine authority) the difference between them, concerning the right or the promised blessing.

We may make very near the same reflections upon the calling of Ruth the Moabitess, when she saith to Naomi her mother-in-law, *Thy God shall be my God, and thy people shall be my people;* which signifies a renouncing of the pretensions of her own people, and an acquiescing in the justice of those of the Israelites; and it was upon this occasion, that Ruth is more particularly taken notice of in the genealogy of our Saviour, as I shall have occasion to shew hereafter.

That which I have hinted concerning the intention and aim of the daughters of Lot, hath been observed before by the Jewish Rabbins, as we may see in the most ancient of their Commentaries upon these words of Genesis, chap. xix. v. 32. *Come, let us make our father drink wine,* &c. Upon which words, R. Tanchumah, following the footsteps of R. Samuel, makes this reflection: *That we may preserve seed of our father;* it is not said, that we may preserve a son from our father, but that we may renew the posterity of our father, *because* (saith he) *they had regard to that seed which was to proceed from a strange place; and what seed is that? It is the King Messiah.*

After this observation upon this action of Lot's daughters, it can no longer rationally be doubted, but that the violent passion which Sarah had for a son, proceeded from the very same impression which made her, contrary to the inclinations of that sex, to deliver her servant into her husband's bosom, especially if we join to this the particular promise God had made to Abraham, which she could not be ignorant of.

Sarah sees herself destitute of children; and her barrenness having continued so long a time, she had no hopes of ever being a mother: what remained therefore for her, but to think of adopting a son of her bond-woman? And in consideration of this, she persuades her husband, who had no inclination to any such thing by any thing that appears (at least precedent to this desire of his wife), to take her unto him. *He sought the seed of God*, that is, the seed which God had promised, as Malachi expresses it, Mal. ii. 15.

At least it is certain, that the Jews have taken these words of Malachi* in this sense for a very long time, as they do still to this day.

We may easily perceive, that this was a predominant impression throughout that whole family, if, to what we have already observed of Lot's daughters and of Sarah, we do but add the sorrow Rebecca conceived because of her barrenness, and the contentions happening between the wives of Jacob for their husband's company; without which supposal, the relation of such a matter would be a thing of no importance.

Certainly, as it would be ridiculous to suppose that so wise an historian as Moses was, should stoop to the recital of such mean and low particulars (not to speak worse of them) without aiming at something very high and considerable, so it is rational to believe that in all these relations he pointed at the promise of the Messiah, which at that time was the great object of the religion of the faithful, which God in process of time did explain by little and little more distinctly.

The jealousy also which arose between Ishmael and Isaac, is no less considerable. Ishmael was the eldest son of Abraham, and circumcised as well as Isaac; he was saved from death by the ministry

* Targ. Jonath. in h. l. & Kimchi in h. l.

of an angel; and was the head of a great people, who from that time to this very day have always been circumcised.

It may be also of great use to take notice here, that Ishmael could not but be instructed by Abraham concerning the promise God had made to him, to which he pretended, as being the elder, and therefore mocked at the great stir that was made at the weaning of Isaac, as thinking that he, being the eldest, could not be deprived of the natural right of his primogeniture. At least, it is very probable, that except it had been thus, Sarah's anger (approved by God himself) would not have proved so violent, as well against Ishmael as Hagar, who flattered him in these pretensions, nor would Abraham so far have complied with it.

And forasmuch as Isaac, on the other side, was born to fulfil a particular promise, was circumcised, and saved from death by an angel; and that, besides all this, Ishmael and he had been equally educated in the practice of religion; it is impossible but that this conformity of events (which has been the cause of such lasting contests between them and their posterity) must have engaged them to inquire into the truth of the creation, and the promise of the Messiah, and into all other matters which did any way concern them.

We have a like instance, if not stronger for our purpose, in Esau and Jacob, who were both born of the same mother; but Esau being the first-born, we find the same jealousy arising between them, as before between Ishmael and Isaac. Sarah seemed somewhat cruel in casting out her adopted son Ishmael; and here we see that Rebecca preferred Jacob before Esau her first-born, and assisted him in robbing his elder brother of the blessing due to him of right: but without question, her design in all this was to entail this blessing on her family, by making it fall on Jacob, as being afraid (and that not without

cause) that Esau, by his sins and his marriage with the Canaanites, had made himself incapable thereof.

Now as this was the occasion of a great dispute between these two Patriarchs educated in the same belief and religion, so it plainly shews us how strong a persuasion they had of the creation, and the promise of the Messiah.

And besides, it is further very remarkable,

First, That Moses represents Esau as a profane person; for which, not only this reason may be alleged, that he sold his birth-right for a mess of pottage, to which birth-right the priesthood was always annexed; but we must further take notice,

That he being educated by his father in the hopes of this blessing, he seemed to laugh at it in all his actions; for first he married the daughter of Heth, by which he sufficiently intimated that he neither minded the blessing nor the curse of God; for Canaan and his posterity had in a very solemn manner been cursed by Noah, with a particular regard to the promise of the Messiah, as I hinted before.

In the second place, he married a daughter of Ishmael, as if he intended to renew the pretensions of Ishmael against Isaac his father.

In the third place we see, that when he repented of this profane humour, he was pierced with extreme sorrow for the crime he had committed, because he could not obtain pardon for it.

This jealousy and difference between Esau and Jacob, is the more considerable, because Esau was the head of a great nation, viz. the Edomites, a people circumcised as well as the Jews, jealous of the posterity of Jacob, and living upon the borders of *Judea*, as well as the Moabites, Ammonites, and Ishmaelites, but yet put by their hopes by that oracle, *The greater people shall serve the lesser.*

Were it needful to afford a greater light to these reflections, I might here add a very natural one, from the oath which Abraham made his servant

Eliezer take, when he sent him to *Padan-Aram*, to procure a wife for Isaac. We may easily judge that he was not willing he should marry a Canaanite, as Lot had done; and that, for fear of forfeiting his hopes, and weakening the just pretensions of Isaac to the right of accomplishing the promise, from whence the Canaanites were excluded by the prophecy delivered by Noah. But that which made Abraham to oblige his servant to swear, putting his hand under his thigh; that is, touching that part which was the subject of circumcision,* and which bore the mark of the covenant; deserves a further consideration.

We find first of all, that the Patriarch Jacob observes the same custom, when he made his son Joseph to take an oath, that he should not bury him in *Egypt*.

Secondly, We find that this custom of beholding that member which received circumcision, as a part consecrated to religion, did by little and little take place in the land of *Canaan*, and gave occasion to the worship of Baal Peor, so famous among the Moabites and Ammonites; a very surprising and strange worship indeed, and yet celebrated with festivals and hymns, and was the rise of that worship which the heathens afterwards gave to Priapus. What I have here observed, hath been in part acknowledged by the Jews, where they speak of the worship of Baal Peor, and the reason which made God prescribe to the priest the use of linen drawers, that their nakedness might not appear during the functions of their ministry.

After all that I have now said, concerning those jealousies which Moses relates with so much care, it seems that the solidity of these observations cannot be disputed; especially if we consider, that it is these jealousies, and these pretensions to the promise of the Messiah, that gave rise to the custom of calling

* St. Jerom.

God, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob: for though he might as well have been called the God of Adam, the God of Enoch, and the God of Noah, forasmuch as all these Patriarchs were also depositaries of the promise of the Messiah; yet it is probable that God was called so, because of the particular promises which had been made, first to Abraham, secondly to Isaac, and lastly to Jacob, and in opposition to the pretensions of some people near neighbours to the Israelites, and jealous of their hopes: the God of Abraham, and not of Lot, as the Ammonites and Moabites, Lot's posterity, pretended; the God of Isaac, and not of Ishmael, as the Ishmaelites pretended; the God of Jacob, and not of Esau, as the Edomites, who were the offspring of Esau, pretended.

CHAP. XVI.

That this very Persuasion seems to have been kept up amongst the Posterity of Jacob, until Moses's Time.

IT is yet easier to shew, that the distinct knowledge of the creation, and of the promise of the Messiah, did continue from Jacob to Joseph, and so on to Moses.

The following arguments will clearly demonstrate it.

First of all, we see that Jacob* being possessed of the blessing, and so depositary of the promise, obeyed Isaac's command, who forbad him to take a wife, but out of his own family; and that accordingly he went to *Padan-Aram*, to seek and get a wife amongst those of his kindred, as Abraham had formerly sent for one of the same country for his son Isaac.

* Gen. xxviii.

We see, in the second place, this Patriarch imitated Lamech* in some respect, by his falling into polygamy: for who can doubt but he who was conscious to himself of having surprised, as he thought, the blessing designed for his elder brother, did act in this occasion by the same principle which Lamech had formerly acted by? Thus we see that barren Rachel follows Sarah's example, and adopts the son of that maid-servant whom she gave to Jacob; wherein Leah followed her, and gave one of her maids to her husband: all this was evidently grounded upon the same principle which afterwards bred those dissensions betwixt Jacob's wives about the getting children by him; for it is very natural to believe, that Jacob did not conceal from his wives his advantages and hopes.

It appears that Jacob's children, which were born, for the most part, in Laban's house in *Chaldea*, where they had seen Abraham's native country, and those of their own kindred, from among whom God had commanded Abraham to depart, and to go into *Canaan*, did entertain very lively notions of those important truths, especially after they were strengthened and confirmed by the cares and instructions of old Isaac, to whom they were brought by Jacob; and after they began to practise in *Canaan* the worship and religion of their own family, and to compare it with the doctrine they had learnt in *Chaldea*.

Those several voyages which God obliged the Patriarchs to undertake, as that of Abraham out of *Ur* of *Chaldea*, that of Jacob out of *Canaan*, (we ought to make the same judgment of Moses's forty years sojourning amongst the Midianites) did evidently oblige them to examine more carefully what was the tradition received in the several countries into which they travelled: and so to imprint the more

* Gen. xxix.

deeply into their minds the belief of those important truths which were the foundation of their religion, and the sole object of the meditations of the faithful.

One sees, in short, the effects of these impressions,

1. By that custom which seems to have begun in Jacob's time, and which afterwards got the authority of a law; I mean, the custom of taking to wife one's own brothers's widow, to raise him up seed.

2. The sin of Onan is represented so odious, only because by it he acted against the belief of the promise.

3. We see the same thing in the action of Thamar, Judah's daughter-in-law; for having been deceived by Judah, she, in exchange, surprised him into an incest, the commission whereof, according to the observation of a Greek commentator,* she sought to perpetuate, only because she had a vehement desire to get children out of a family which she looked upon as solely intrusted with the promise of the Messiah, and out of which he was accordingly to be born.

It is necessary to make that observation, because we ought always to remember that she was formerly a Canaanite, and that consequently she left off and renounced the impiety and idolatry of her kindred, when she embraced the religion and hopes of Jacob's family. Therefore we see that particular mention is made of her in our Saviour's genealogy, and of Ruth, who likewise gave over all the pretensions of her own people, and so forsook her religion to enter into the tribe of Judah, as well as of Bathshebah, who was wife to a Hittite; whereupon an ancient father hath very well observed,† according to the Jewish opinion, that Shimei's revilings against David, when he went out of *Jerusalem*, during Absalom's rebellion, reflected upon his birth out of the posterity of Ruth the Moab-

* Theoph. in Mat. c. i. † S. Hieronym. in Tradit. Heb. ad 1. Reg. 3.

itess, as the Jews even to this very day do understand it.

We may make the same reflection upon the consideration of that implacable jealousy which Joseph's dreams raised in the minds of his brethren.

1. We may reasonably conceive, that he being the first-born of Rachel, and the wife which Jacob his father had first made love to, he had been brought up with hopes of the birth-right, as well as Isaac, who was but the second son of Abraham.

But, 2. He might besides very well suppose, that the crimes of his brethren born of Leah (whom in all likelihood he looked upon as the sole legitimate heirs, the others being born of maid-servants) did rank them with Esau, whom God had rejected. That outrageous fury which Joseph's brethren shewed against him, because they looked upon him as preferred of God by those dreams to those that were born before him, is so like that of Cain, of Lot, of Ishmael, and of Esau, that it had, in all probability, the same cause and original.

Do we not see afterwards another effect of the same jealousy in the affectation that Jacob and his family shewed in the land of *Egypt*, when they refused to live promiscuously with the Egyptians, which were the posterity of Ham, and begged of them a country where they might live by themselves; as we see, on the contrary, the Egyptians shewing an extreme aversion against Jacob and his family, which was of Shem's posterity.

Certainly it cannot be denied, that as this separation was an effect of the antipathy of those nations, so it might also be in some respect the consequence of Jacob and his children's pretensions upon the promise of the Messiah, the execution and accomplishment whereof they stood up for as belonging to themselves.

To all this we may add, that the persecution of the Egyptians against the Israelites obliged them to

make particular reflections upon the promise which Jacob on his death-bed made to them from God: that persecution was chiefly intended against the male children, Pharaoh commanding the extirpation of them, because he was afraid of the Jews growing too strong for him, and of their joining with his enemies; and perhaps also, because the Jews entertaining a certain expectation of the Messiah's coming, and so boasting and glorying of it upon all occasions, the Egyptians designed to frustrate and cut off their hope thus, by hindering the accomplishment of the promise.

However, there was no real difficulty to keep up the distinct remembrance of those important facts. Jacob died in the year of the world 2315: Joseph died in the year of the world 2428. There are then but 58 years between Joseph's death and Moses's birth: Moses might have seen not only Amram his own father, who had seen Levi, but also Kohath his grandfather, who had seen Jacob.

And it is for that reason that Moses seems to have observed, that Joseph saw his own children's children; that is to say, the third generation.

One cannot imagine any circumstances more conducible than these, to the preserving the distinct knowledge of those important truths which were the foundations of religion.

CHAP. XVII.

That the Tradition which gives us an Account of the Persuasion which the Ancients had of the Truth of the Creation of the world, and of the Promise of the Messiah, before Moses, cannot be suspected.

I HAVE shewed, I think evidently enough, that both the Creation, and the Promise of the Messiah, with all the other things depending upon them, might have been known certainly by Adam and his chil-

dren, and so afterwards he handed down to all his posterity till Moses's time.

From Adam to Noah there is but one man, viz Methuselah, who joined hands with both.

From Noah to Abraham there is but one man, viz. Shem, who saw them both for a considerable time.

From Abraham to Joseph there is but one man, viz. Isaac, Joseph's grandfather.

From Joseph to Moses there is but one man, viz. Amram, who might have seen Joseph long enough.

Those characters of time which Moses hath so carefully observed, do plainly evidence that the creation, and the promise of the Messiah, might be distinctly known: for if we suppose a continued succession of Adam's offspring, it was not easy to impose upon men in that matter; and that, because every one of those who were contemporaries with Moses, being able to run up his own pedigree as far as the flood, nay, even up to Adam, by as compendious a way as Moses could do his own, they would have treated those with the utmost degree of scorn, who should have attempted to forge any thing contrary to what was publicly and universally known; and so it was equally impossible, that the truth of things so important as the creation and the promise of the Messiah were, should be unknown.

Besides, I think I have plainly shewed, that many actions recorded by Moses, though very strange in themselves, and which the Atheists look upon as absurd and ridiculous, have proceeded from no other principle than from the strong persuasion of the truth of those facts, according as in a long series of ages, every one of the ancients, following his own humour and prejudices, framed to himself a particular idea differing from the true sense of the promise of the Messiah.

It cannot reasonably be objected, that all this is only grounded upon the uncertain authority of tra-

dition; for though I grant that tradition as to facts of another nature, be dubious and uncertain, and not to be too much relied upon in matter of belief, yet this hath such very particular characters as keep up its own authority.

First, it supposeth a small number of persons from Adam to Moses, who put it in writing.

Secondly, it supposeth that those who have preserved this tradition, lived very long and for the most part for many centuries of years.

Thirdly, it relates to such facts as every one is desirous rightly to be informed of, and which he is particularly concerned to examine, as relating to his own private interest, because they are the principles of his actions, and the rules of his conduct both in civil and religious matters.

Fourthly, it supposeth such real marks as served to keep it up; such as, the pains of child-bearing, the paradise before the flood, the duration of the ark after the flood.

Fifthly, it supposeth a public service and worship, whose celebration is repeated fifty-two times a year, that the remembrance of it should be preserved by all posterity.

Sixthly, it was preserved entire by passing from father to son; and we know that fathers or mothers do not naturally engage in a design of deceiving their children.

Seventhly, it supposeth strange controversies betwixt brothers, the elder having almost been all excluded and the younger, as Abel, Seth, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, chosen to accomplish the promise of the Messiah, which bred great jealousies, and tended much to preserve those ideas of the truth.

Lastly, it supposeth great contests betwixt whole nations, who all strove one with another for the great advantage of being the heirs of the promise, and depositaries of those verities; as the Moabites, for instance, the Ammonites, the Ishmaelites, the Edomites,

and the Jews: each of them pretending to a preference before the other, by God himself, and so making it a matter of credit and honour to themselves. All these characters contribute to the distinct preservation of the knowledge of any truth.

CHAP. XVIII.

An Explication of Moses's Way of Writing; where it is shewed, that in writing the Book of Genesis he mentioned nothing but what was then generally known.

THIS is a truth which at first I took for granted, and afterwards proved it, the reasons whereof I explained particularly as I went on. But it ought to be fixed as solidly as the matter will bear, because it often happens, that those who do not foresee the consequences which may be drawn from the contrary opinion, do contradict it before they are aware of it; and that too, under pretence of exalting the Divine authority of the book of Genesis; which gives occasion to the Atheists to look upon it no otherwise than as learned men do on the greatest part of legends.

The prophetical spirit acts in two manners.

The first is, by way of revelation, in respect of those things the prophet hath no knowledge of. Thus the Evangelist St. John hath foretold those events which we read of in the Revelations: for those events being all hidden under the shadows of futurity, it was impossible for him to have foretold them, unless the Spirit of God had immediately revealed them to him.

The second is, by way of direction, in respect of those things with which the Prophet was himself acquainted, either because he was an eye-witness of them himself, or because he learnt them from those who were so.

Now this direction of the Spirit consists in the guiding the Prophet so as that he may write of his subject just as it was either spoken or done. Thus the Evangelists St. Matthew and St. John drew up an abridgment of those sermons of our Saviour which they had heard, and of those miracles which they had seen.

And thus St. Luke and St. Mark have written of those things which they had heard from those that were eye-witnesses of them as St. Luke particularly tells us.

Now I affirm, that when Moses wrote the book of Genesis, he had only the second sort of prophetical influences, and not the first; although in our disputes against Atheists, to convince them by arguments from matters of fact, we may consider him only as an historian, who might have written his book without any other particular direction, and might have preserved in it the memory of those ancient events which were then generally known.

Now, what side soever Divines may take in their disputes against the Atheists, I may easily establish my assertion: first, because it is not necessary to suppose an entire revelation, where tradition being distinct enough, is sufficient to preserve a clear remembrance of all those facts.

Now it cannot be denied, but that the tradition concerning the creation and the promise of the Messiah was of this nature, especially if we consider the little extent of it, and the immediate succession of Moses's ancestors, down to himself.

Secondly, if Abraham's and Jacob's travels through so many places were, as I have observed already, very useful to give them a further view of the common belief of all the several nations descended from Noah, and of their agreement in this tradition, it were unjust to suppose that Moses's forty years sojourning in the country of Midian, and that too when he was forty years old, and consequently had that

ripeness of age and judgment as is fittest for such observations, did not serve to acquaint him with the several passages he records of Abraham, as well as of the several divisions of his posterity.

Thirdly, we may observe in the book of Genesis a way of writing very different from that which we see in the greatest part of Exodus, and in the following books; for whereas God speaks to him in those latter books, which he always did *vivâ voce*. (And the Jews have wisely observed, that herein consisted Moses's advantage above the other Prophets, to whom God was used to speak only in dreams and visions.) He uses commonly those words, *And the Lord spake unto me*. He marks out the place where God spoke to him, as well as the time and occasion of God's speaking to him, which he does not in his book of Genesis.

Fourthly, the book of Genesis is not divided into several revelations, as all prophecies are, wherein the several returns of the holy Spirit of God are all exactly set down; which was absolutely necessary, not only to ease the reader, who might be tired if he was to carry a long series of predictions in his mind at once, as if it were only one single vision or revelation, but also to condescend to the nature of the minds of men: for, according to the rules of probability, we cannot suppose them to be filled with so many differing ideas at the same time time, but a great confusion must necessarily follow.

But supposing that these observations should be thought insufficient, yet those that follow will seem capable of convincing the minds of all. There are in the book of Genesis certain characters of its being written in that way which I spake of. First, one needs only just look into that book, and he will see that the ancientest facts, which are those of which we most desire a particular account, are there described in a very short and concise manner. The history of 1656 years is all contained in eight chapters; there

are no actions described therein with more circumstances than only some few of the most important, the remembrance whereof was still fresh amongst them. The history of Lamech's polygamy, and the the murders of which he was guilty, is there set down so compendiously, that it is very obscure.

Secondly, one sees that he speaks more copiously of all that had been transacted near his time: he explains and mentions all the particulars and circumstances thereof. He speaks so shortly of Melchisedeck, that it is doubted to this day whether he was not the Patriarch Shem, or some other faithful worshipper of the true God settled in the land of *Canaan;* whereas he sets down at length all the particulars of the history of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, whose last oracles, which he spoke on his deathbed, he carefully records.

Thirdly, he describes with the same exactness all the genealogies of the Edomites, their several tribes, and the names of their heads and captains, &c. as when he speaks of those of the people of Israel, which indeed he could easily do, having lived forty years of his life amongst those nations, as well as he had other forty years amongst the Israelites.

Those who maintain the contrary opinion, must of necessity suppose, first, That tradition is of no use at all to preserve the idea of any illustrious action.

Secondly, That in Moses's time there were none who knew any particulars of the history of the flood, &c. of the tower of *Babel*, of the division of tongues; though we see plainly, both by the nature of the facts themselves, in which all nations were concerned, and by Moses's description, that the generality of mankind were sufficiently instructed in them already.

Thirdly, It must be supposed that Moses hath set down the manner how that tradition was infallibly preserved so carefully to no purpose, though he took notice of all the circumstances necessary for that effect.

Fourthly, They must suppose that Moses, whilst he sojourned in the land of *Midian*, heard nothing either of their original and pedigree, nor yet of the other neighbouring nations who were descended from Abraham, although all these nations valued themselves upon their being descended from that Patriarch, and kept up their several pedigrees, by which they could trace their original with the same care as the Israelites did theirs, because they had the same pretensions that the Israelites had.

Lastly, We must absolutely take away the authority of the oracles recorded by Moses in Genesis. These oracles promise to Abraham the possession of the land of *Canaan* for his posterity, and threaten the Canaanites with several curses. Jacob by his will bequeathed *Sichem* to the tribe of Joseph: he expressly marks out the country which one of the tribes was to possess; he gives a description of the character and rank of every tribe. The accomplishment of those oracles, though never so exact and admirable, is of no manner of consequence, if we suppose that these particular predictions were absolutely unknown in Abraham's family; whereas their accomplishment, which he carefully describes from time to time, is the most solid demonstration which can be desired, to establish the divinity of those revelations, as well as of Moses's other books.

CHAP. XIX.

An Answer to an Objection which may be drawn from the Histories of the Egyptians and Chaldeans, concerning the Antiquity of the world.

WHAT I have already represented is sufficient to prove that Moses writ nothing in the book of Genesis, but what was then generally known by all the world. And I know nothing that can be objected with any probability, but what we read in the most ancient authors concerning the Egyptian and Chaldean history, and in the modern ones concerning that of *China*. We must then examine both the one and the other with attention, that we may leave no difficulties in so important a subject.

All that the Atheists can object against the history of Moses, concerning the epocha of the creation of the world as he had fixed it, is what Diodorus Siculus relates, that in the time of Alexander the Great there were some Egyptians that reckoned up three and twenty thousand years from the reign of the sun to Alexander's time, and that those who reckoned least, yet reckoned somewhat more than ten thousand years; which account exceeds the antiquity which Moses ascribes to the world in the book of Genesis, by many ages, where he represents the creation as a fact which happened some few years more than two thousand five hundred before he wrote that book. How then did Moses write of things universally acknowledged by all the world? And they may here further aggravate what the same Diodorus hath observed, that the history of the Egyptians was not written like that of the Greeks; amongst whom, those who came first wrote their own histories, every man according to his own private humour, which caused that great variety amongst their historians:

whereas amongst the Egyptians none wrote but by public authority, the priests alone having that particular employment reserved for them, to write their histories in their several generations.

This objection is easily confuted in two words: in short, how could the Egyptians have always had men to write their histories by public authority in all their succeeding generations, seeing there were, as Diodorus observes, such strange and vast divisions amongst themselves? If there were but two or three ages difference, more or less, nobody would look upon it as a material exception against the history of such a long series of time; but who can imagine that those men who differ no less than thirteen thousand years in their accounts of the duration of the same interval of time, had yet certain histories upon which these things were grounded?

This shews sufficiently, that as Varro, the greatest scholar the Romans ever had, hath divided antiquity into fabulous and historical, which he begins from the first Olympiad, leaving all which went before to the fabulous part, so we must of necessity make the same distinction in the matter of the antiquities of *Egypt*.

But I intend to do something more, and to consider this Egyptian history with a little more attention; out of which, I think, I may draw good arguments to confute the vanity of those passages in it opposed to Moses, and to confirm the authority of his book of Genesis, and the truth of the chiefest transactions recorded in it.

I shall not at present take notice, that although the Egyptians, about their latter times, have maintained that the elements were eternal, yet they have sufficiently acknowledged that the world had a beginning, seeing they make no mention of any thing before their thirty Dynasties, which in all did at the most amount to no more than 36525 years.

Neither do I think necessary to mention here that they have sufficiently acknowledged the beginning of mankind, seeing they held that men were first born in *Egypt;* although they endeavoured to make good their pretensions by that sottish assertion of the easy production of frogs out of the mud of their fens, as the same Diodorus tells us.

But there are three things which I must here take notice of, because they do most certainly decide the question.

The first is, That by that long reign which they ascribe to their gods and heroes, there is nothing else meant but the motion of the stars, and nothing like a real kingdom. That prodigious number of years does not relate to the duration of the world, as if it had subsisted so long; but to the return of the sun, and the moon, and the five other planets, and of the heavens, to the same point from whence, according to the opinion of the Egyptians, they first began their course: in a word, it is only the great astronomical year, about which, as Aristotle tells us, the ancients have had so many different opinions, and the Egyptians have so little agreed, as the history of their antiquities related by Diodorus, plainly shews. One thing evidently proves what I here allege, which is, that they have reckoned up but fifteen Dynasties to Jupiter, the last of the heroes, that is to say, but fifteen persons to Jupiter, who is Ham the third son of Noah.

This comes very near Moses's calculation, who reckoneth Noah as the tenth man from Adam; for it is very likely that those ignorant people, after a long process of time, have joined Cain and Abel with Shem and Japhet, and Misraim the son of Ham, which makes up the sixteen Dynasties; except we choose to say that the Egyptians thought fit to join the seven generations of Cain to those before the flood, which comes very near to the same account. All this, according to the fantastic notions of those

ancient people who deified the first men, and gave them afterwards the names of some stars, to impress upon their posterity a greater veneration for them; and in particular, according to the groundless imagination of the Egyptians, who were resolved to maintain that the first men were formed in their own country. And in short we find that those Dynasties for the most part, if we except those of Vulcan and of the sun, have been but of a very short continuance, and even shorter than that which Moses ascribes to the lives of the ancient Patriarchs, which we have already set down.

The second thing that is observable in the confutation of this false antiquity, if one would take what the Egyptians have related of the Dynasties before Menes, and Jupiter the last of their heroes, in an historical sense, is, that there are still sufficient marks of the newness of the world, as Moses hath described it, in the remaining fragments of the true Egyptian history.

First, We see that *Egypt* hath constantly carried the name of Ham amongst the Gentiles, as well as in the holy Scriptures. It was called so in Plutarch's time: the Egyptian Thebes was called Hammon No Ezech. 30. which is the name of the Egyptian Jupiter, as the heathen authors Herodotus and Plutarch testify. Now it is visible that all this was for no other reason but because Egypt had fallen to the share of Ham, Noah's third son, who settled there, and whose posterity did afterwards people Africa, and gave it their several names, as Moses particularly observes.

Secondly, One sees that Egypt hath more particularly borne the name of Mizraim, which it bears still, and which was given to it, in respect of one of its parts, because of Mizraim the son of Ham. And it would be ridiculous for one to imagine that those characters given by Moses, had been allowed of in the world, except he had had good grounds to des-

cribe their original in the same manner as he hath already done.

Thirdly, One sees that all the Dynasties of *Egypt*, that is to say, all the several branches of the kings who have reigned over the several parts of *Egypt*, did all acknowledge Menes for their common founder.

This Menes being the same with that Mizraim of Moses, as I shall shew hereafter; it is visible that the Egyptians, who in all likelihood have ascribed to Menes what they might more justly have ascribed to Jupiter Hammon, because they would distinguish their kings from heroes, have exactly followed the ideas of Moses, in representing one as the common father of all the several branches of kings who divided *Egypt* amongst themselves.

Fourthly, One sees that the invention of the arts most necessary to human life have been attributed either to Menes the first king of *Egypt*, or to his successors. It was this Menes, or one of his successors, who invented laws, letters, astronomy, music, wrestling, physic, hieroglyphics, anatomy, and architecture. All this plainly shews that the Egyptians had been mistaken, if they had ascribed to the world as great an antiquity as one would think they did, by the vast extent of time which they ascribed to the Dynasties of their gods and heroes. How could the world have continued above thirty thousand years without those arts which are so necessary for the convenience of human life? How could men not have found out, during such a prodigious succession of ages, those arts, the invention whereof the Egyptians do ascribe to their first king, or to one or two of his successors, during a very short interval of time?

Fifthly, One sees in the history of *Egypt* the same decay in religion that Moses speaks of.* The ancients unanimously agree that the Egyptians had at first neither statues nor images in their temples,

* Herod. lib. ii. cap. 4. Lucian de Dea Syr.

which perfectly agrees with what Moses tells us of the times after the flood: but they tell us also, that the Egyptians afterwards made some statues, and consecrated in their temples the figures of great numbers of animals. Some are of opinion, and that probably enough, that this came from the belief which they entertained afterwards of the transmigration of souls into other animals, an opinion which they thought did necessarily flow from the doctrine of the immortality of the soul.

Sixthly, However, one sees in the sixth place, that as Moses represents Nimrod, one of Ham's posterity, as the founder of an empire in *Assyria*, where he formed the manners of the inhabitants according to the platform of the Egyptian principles, so the ancients have observed, that the famous Assyrian Belus came out of *Egypt;* and it is natural to conceive, that there he planted idolatry, which began even before Abraham's time;† if it be true, as the Jews observe, that the tower of Babel was a temple, wherein an idol was consecrated to worship him. At least, that conjecture hath a very solid ground, if we consider the idolatry of the Babylonians towards this Bel, whom they worshipped as a god, according to the Pagan custom of adoring the founders of kingdoms, after their decease, as gods.

The third thing we are here to take notice of, contains a demonstration of the truth of the book *Genesis*, if that which is recorded in it concerning the time of the flood, be compared with the Dynasties of the Egyptian kings. I will not say that those Egyptians who had any knowledge of the flood, did exactly mark out the time of it, as Moses doth; but I believe I may be able to shew out of their common opinions, something very nearly equivalent.

* Pausan. in Messen. p. 261.

They all agreed that Menes was the first king of *Egypt*, and lived about fourteen hundred years before the famous Sesostris, as Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus do both relate it: now, who should this king of *Egypt* be, whom some call Sesonchosis, unless he is the same with Shishak whom the Scripture speaks of in the history of Rehoboam,* even the same famous conqueror who took *Jerusalem* in the fifth year of Rehoboam's reign? If one calculates the time from the flood to the fifth year of Rehoboam, he will find that this Menes, the first king of *Egypt*, is no other than the Ham of Moses; and on the other side, that there is very little difference, in respect to that interval of time, betwixt the chronology of the Egyptians and that of the Scriptures. Thus the Egyptian account confirms Moses's narrative, and the authority of the holy writers, who are very particular in stating the times of every thing: whereas the Egyptians, taking all in great, could never arrive at that exactness.

This observation is of very great use, to shew the certainty of Moses's chronology according to the Hebrew text; for that of the Septuagint reckons up above two thousand years from the flood to Sesostris; whereas the Egyptians did reckon up but a little above fourteen hundred years from Menes, the first king of *Egypt*, to Sesostris.

There is less difficulty to answer the objection which may be made against the book of Genesis, from the pretended antiquity of the Chaldeans. The same Diodorus Siculus† who saith that the Egyptians proposed so great an antiquity of the world, tells us also that the Chaldeans believed it eternal, and that they boasted, in Alexander's time, that they had learned astronomy by tradition, from their ancestors, who had all successively made it their study for four

* 1 Kings, xiv. 26. † Diod. l. 2. sect. 30, 31.

hundred seventy-two thousand years together. But there is nothing vainer than these pretences.

I shall not stand to shew here the folly of their opinions about the eternity of the world: if Aristotle seems to have authorised it, yet it is enough to confute that opinion, to consider, that it is repugnant to the common notions of all the nations of the world; so that Democritus himself, who pretended that the world was made by chance, yet durst not oppose the common and general opinion of the world's being new, though he had the boldness to reject the author of it, and that action by which it was created.

Neither do I intend to be prolix here in confuting the supposition of the Chaldeans, about their ancestors following the study of astrology for 472000 years successively: the impossibility of the thing in itself is apparent by the certainty of the flood, which was acknowledged by all those nations of whom we have any antiquities, though never so little considerable, in Pagan authors.

But I shall make two observations, whereof one shews the folly of the Chaldean hypothesis, and the other doth invincibly establish the authority of the book of Genesis, if it be compared with what we know for certain, and in the Chaldean history.

The first is, That the most ancient authors are of opinion, that the Chaldeans are descended from the Egyptians, who looked upon them as a colony of their own. Diodorus Siculus saith, that the Egyptians maintained that they had sent out several colonies into several parts of the world; that Belus the son of Neptune and Lybia, had conducted one into *Babylon*, and that having fixed it near *Euphrates*, he established some priests among them according to the Egyptian custom, who were free from all public charges and offices, whom the Babylonians do call Chaldeans, and who, according to the example of the Egyptian priests, philosophers, and astrologers,

did apply themselves to the observation of the stars. Hestiæus and Pausanias say the same with Diodorus.*

Now, one need only examine here, what the Egyptians do say about the invention of astrology, which they ascribe to Menes, that is to say, to Ham, or to Mizraim, who lived after the flood, thereby to discover the foolish vanity of the Chaldeans.

It is plain that the Chaldeans grew so vain, by the growth of so considerable an empire as theirs was, that they would be no longer beholden to the Egyptian astrologers, whom all other nations have looked upon as the first inventors of that science, to the inventing and perfecting of which, all men know that the Egyptian climate, where the sky is always free from clouds, did very much contribute.

And it is very considerable, that both the Chaldeans and the Egyptians began their year with the same month, according to Censorinus's observation, c. xxi. *de Die Nat.*

I know very well, the ancient heathens were mistaken when they pretended that the Chaldeans went out of *Egypt*, as a plantation: there is, no doubt, a kind of illusion in this their opinion; but yet the ground and origin of it is uncontrollable, because the Chaldeans are descended from Cush, Ham's eldest son, as Moses tells, Gen. x. Therefore, though we should grant that the Chaldeans were the first inventors of astrology, yet this would always be certain, that it was found out only since Ham's time, whom the Egyptians did look upon as the last of their heroes, or as the first of their kings.

The other observation which ought to be well minded here, is taken out of the true and genuine Chaldean antiquities. One may prove by the astronomical demonstrations of the Chaldeans, which the people of Israel was altogether unacquainted with, that Moses

* Ap. Joseph. Antiq. l. 1. c. 5. Pausan. Messen p. 261.

followed a calculation which was then generally known.

Aristotle, the first Grecian that ever taught the eternity of the world, contrary to Moses's history, is the man who furnishes us with it. He took care to send over into *Greece* the astronomical observations of the Chaldeans,* by which it appeared that *Babylon* was taken by Alexander about 1903 years after its foundation. Now that calculation agrees exactly with that of Moses, who gives us the description of the tower of *Babel*,† and explains the original of the name of that city, which was built some ages after, by the confusion of tongues which then happened. And truly, it would be very admirable, that the heavens in their motions should have entered into a confederacy with Moses, to justify a chronology invented by him in sport, without keeping to any rules, but writing by chance, and without any certain principle.

CHAP. XX.

An Answer to the Objection which may be drawn out of the History of China, against the Mosaic Hypothesis, concerning the Newness of the World.

I COME now to the other objection which may be made against Moses's calculation, according to the Hebrew text, as we have it now. It is drawn from the History of *China*, whose uninterrupted series runs up the succession of their emperors to Fohius, who reigned about four hundred years before the flood. Some learned men have already made use of that argument, to discredit the Mosaic chronology according to the Hebrew text, and to cry up the cal-

* Simplic. in l. 2. dr. cœlo. † Gen. xi.

culation of the Septuagint, which exceeds that of the Hebrew text in the history before the flood, by 800 years, and above 700 in the history from the flood to Moses. This objection appears very strong to those who read in the history of Martinius, that there is not the least interruption in the catalogue of the kings of *China* from Fohius; that the history of their actions is so certain, having always been written by a public authority, that no man can reasonably entertain any doubt about it: and the missionaries in *China* have thought that there was no other way to reconcile the Mosaic chronology with the Chinese, but in making use of the Septuagint's account; and wherein they agree with all the Asiatic Christians, and even those in *Europe*, who follow the Septuagint in their reckoning up the years of the world, for the most part; though St. Hierome's translation, which follows the Hebrew text exactly, is received in the west.

But, after all, there is little difficulty in answering this objection; and we may hereupon easily satisfy those who do not dispute only for disputing sake, but are ready to examine this question with that equity which is requisite in the examination of all questions of that nature.

I confess, ingenuously, that this history, which is one of the most ancient in the world, hath many illustrious characters of certainty, especially if we give credit to all that Martinius relates of it.

First, it marks out exactly the series and succession of all the kings of *China*, from the very beginning and original of that nation.

Secondly, it records in what year of each cycle of threescore years every king began his reign, and did such or such an action.

Thirdly, it relates some astronomical observations, older than any that have been made by the most ancient astronomers in other nations.

Fourthly, it was written by a public authority, and by such authors as lived in the time when the things

which they record were transacted; the immediate successor to the empire taking always care, that the history of his predecessor should be written.

Nay, to all this we must add, that the Chinese way of writing, making no use of letters, but of hieroglyphics, may have prevented these alterations which might otherwise have been made in their history; the whole life of a man being hardly sufficient to attain to the perfect knowledge of a tongue which hath above threescore thousand figures, which must be all learnt before a man can be able only to read and write.

But, besides that, all this depends upon the sole authority of Martinius, nobody else beside him having given us as yet any opportunities of examining those ancient monuments of *China*. We may find out of this very history some strong proofs to confirm that of Moses, and so easily resolve the difficulties which may be raised out of it, against the book of Genesis.

First, F. Martinius observes, that the common opinion of the Chinese is, that the world had a beginning; and though there be some of them of Epicurus's opinion, yet there was never any amongst them that was for the eternity of the world, but since the incarnation of Christ, and the introduction of idolatry amongst them.

Secondly, he tells us, that they commonly acknowledged a God, whom they call *Xangti*, which is not the name, but the epithet of God, this word signifying supreme governor of heaven and earth.

Thirdly, he saith that they acknowledge a first man, brought forth out of the chaos, in one night in the spring; which opinion some amongst them have made intricate, by the addition of their own fables.

Fourthly, he shews that sacrifices have been in use amongst them.

Fifthly, that they believe a certainty of punishments and rewards after this life, for vice and virtue.

Sixthly, that they believe the existence of good and bad angels.

Seventhly, that they assign to some of them the protection of cities and provinces, and pay them great veneration at the instalment of their magistrates.

Eighthly, that they acknowledge them to be incorporeal beings, and that it is but of late that they have erected and consecrated statues to them.

And lastly, that they have a very great knowledge of the flood, which in their account happened about 3500 years before Jesus Christ.

Here are, we see, many truths which are the grounds of religion, and which were known to them; from whence we may easily judge, in comparing those truths with the history of Moses, that the ancient Chinese did agree with all other nations, in the believing the first principles of religion laid down by Moses.

We may likewise observe, that those antiquities of *China*, for the most part, are as like those recorded by Moses, as a tradition (which cannot but have received many alterations during such a long interval of time) can be like to an exact narrative of matters of fact drawn up by an author who knew very well what he writ.

First, it appears that what they say concerning the thirteen successors of the first man, named Puoncuus, all descended from him, is agreeable enough to the history of Genesis, which sets down the successive Patriarchs from father to son: all the difference is, that the Chinese, by a foolish ambition of appropriating all to themselves, maintain that those thirteen kings were all in *China*.

Secondly, what they tell us of the world being civilized under the second of those kings, called Thienhoang, after the death of the great dragon that had disturbed heaven and earth, agrees very well with the history of Seth, who began to form

mankind to a right notion of the worship of God, when he separated them from Cain's family.

Thirdly, it is very probable that when the Chinese have reckoned up thirteen kings lineally descended from the first man and his successors, they have included in that number Cain and Abel, who though they were both the sons of the first man, yet were not reckoned up by Moses, because his scope was only to give an account of the lineal descent of Adam's posterity by Seth.

They believe that under Ginhohang there was a kind of a golden age, the earth being then fruitful to admiration; and that under his successor men being extremely simple, and altogether ignorant of the several arts necessary to human life, as of characters and letters, one Sujus, to supply the want of them, contrived a way of keeping up the memory of things, by tying several sorts of knots upon a cord.

All which sufficiently evinces, that the belief of the world's being lately created, according to Moses's description, was as much received by the ancient people of *China* as by all other nations.

And here it is further observable, That the Chinese themselves, according to Martinius's account, do suspect all the historical records of their empire, before king Fohius, looking upon them as false and ridiculous: and indeed the people of that country, before Fohius, living like brute beasts, without any settled governments, laws, or arts, this alone is enough to confute those amongst the Chinese who maintain nowadays, that the duration of the world before Confucius, who lived about 500 years before Jesus Christ, was of no less than three millions two hundred threescore and seven thousand years; for hereby it clearly appears, that they have foolishly affected to surpass the Chaldeans in their vanity, who, believing the eternity of the world, pretended, in order both to prove their antiquity, and to give credit to their astrological observations, that astrology had been exer-

cised amongst them for 472000 years before Alexander's entering into *Asia*.

After all, it is certain, that their calculation of 3000 years, from Fohius to Jesus Christ, is only incompatible with Moses's chronology, according to the Hebrew text, and not at all with that of the Septuagint.

But moreover, what can be more palpably fabulous than the whole history of Fohius, whom the Chinese suppose to have begun his reign 2952 years before Jesus Christ? First, he is called the Son of Heaven, because, they say, he had a mother and no father; and that his mother conceived him by the banks of a lake near the town *Lanthieu*, where, as she was walking, she saw the footsteps of a man upon the sand, and was at the same time surrounded on a sudden with a rainbow.

Secondly, the situation of that town, which is in the west of *China*, does demonstrate that the first inhabitants of *China* came thither from the western parts of the world, and that consequently they were of Shem's posterity, according to Moses's account in the tenth of Genesis.

Thirdly, although there be perhaps no incongruity in their ascribing to him the study of astronomy, and the invention of several institutions necessary to human society, as laws, &c. yet what they add, that he was the first inventor of several figures, which he had seen upon the back of a dragon, sufficiently shews, that either the whole history is but a fable, or that he was a cheat, and imposed upon the simplicity of ignorant people.

What probability is there (seeing it is supposed *China* was then all over infested and overgrown with barbarism) that in his time it should be recorded in writing, 1. That he invented, instead of those knots before mentioned, the hieroglyphics, which are almost as obscure; 2. That men were then distinguished from women by the difference of their garments; 3.

That marriages were then fixed and regulated, which before were as promiscuous amongst men as amongst beasts?

What they say of his being the author of a musical instrument of 36 chords, shews evidently the falsehood of the story; for there is nothing more improbable, than to suppose that he should arrive to such perfection of improvement in music as that comes to, when that art had but very lately been invented. It is all that men could attain unto, after they have long improved this art, the beginnings whereof, without doubt, as of all other arts, were very rough and imperfect.

Surely the Egyptians were more reasonable when they attributed the invention of the lyre with three strings to Mercury, Saturn's secretary, who is the same with Noah.

The history of *China* takes notice that the beginning of husbandry and physic was under Fohius's successor; it does not mention whether he was his son, or no; but it only gives an account of the first war, wherein he was routed by a petty king, one of his subjects, who succeeded him in the empire.

And what is most singular in that record, is, that therein is ascribed to that usurper, 1. the invention of the cycle of 60 years, which serves to fix their chronology; 2. the method of regulating weights and measures; 3. that it was by his means and encouragement that some of his contemporary subjects found out the sphere, arithmetic, laws, judicial astrology, several musical instruments, the art of dying and of coining, the joiners and carpenters trade, so far as to make boats and bridges. They pretend that he never died, but that he was translated alive into that place which the Chinese do assign for eternal happiness. It is Pliny's* observation, that this way and custom of deifying the first inventors of arts

* Lib. ii. cap. 7. Hist. Nat.

necessary to human life, is very ancient; but if it be an old custom, it is also a pregnant sign of the ignorance that reigned amongst those ancient people that used it. Therefore we may as justly suspect the history of the Chinese, amongst whom it is in use, as the Egyptian accounts, which were much of the same nature in Alexander's time, as we are informed by Diodorus Siculus. The posterity or the successors of those famous men have always affected in process of time, by such means, to immortalise their names, to the end they might raise up themselves and their families as well as to power and authority, as to honour and veneration, above all other men with whom they conversed.

But, however, we may reasonably conjecture that those several passages recorded in that history, having, for the greatest part of them, a great conformity with the transactions related in Moses's history, which was not unknown to the Chaldeans, with whom the Chinese had communication and correspondence, all those pretences and claims of theirs to the invention of these arts, is an honour which they have borrowed from others, to lend it to the founders of their empire; just as the Egyptians have appropriated to their first kings, some arts which were found out by the Patriarchs before the flood; or as the Greeks have made their first princes the first inventors of those very arts, the invention of which the Egyptians ascribed to their first kings.

And this reflection will appear the more probable and natural, if we consider what they relate, that under the fourth successor of Fohius there arose an impostor, famous by his delusions, who endeavoured to alter the religion of the Chinese, and to bring in idolatry amongst them; which brought great misfortunes upon *China*. For hereby it is evident, that the Chinese in their history have disguised, and so appropriated to themselves, some passages which relate to Nimrod's time, since the original of idolatry is to be

referred to the time of building of the tower of Babel, which was intended for an idol temple, if we will believe what passes for a received opinion amongst the Jews.

Chuenhious is said to have been the restorer of the worship of one God, and to have annexed the priesthood to the kingly power; and to have regulated the Calendar; and to have found out the ephemerides of the five planets, after an entire conjunction of those five planets, before the day of the conjunction of the sun with the moon; and to have fixed to that day, the beginning of the year, which agrees with our beginning the year in January.

But yet it is to be observed,

1. That, notwithstanding this pretended astronomical observation, there have been several alterations made of the beginning of the year according to the fancy and pleasure of several emperors, which shews that there was no constant rule observed in that country.

2. That Martinius seems to have approved of the calculation of this conjunction of five planets in Aquarius, to accommodate the false astrological prejudice of the Chinese with that of several authors, who, looking upon the flood as a natural event, have groundlessly imagined that it was brought to pass by the virtue and influence of such a conjunction, and that it was a certain sign of a flood. It is this foolish and whimsical fancy which hath made some Grecians preposterously sedulous in seeking out that dreadful year, the winter whereof was to drown the world with a flood, and the summer to burn it with a general conflagration, as Censorinus* and Aristotle† have observed it. It is a judicious remark which Origanus‡ hath made upon the observations of those astrologers who, from the conjunction of the planets in

* *Cens. de die nat. c.* 18. † *Arist. l.* 1. *meteor. c.* 14.
‡ *Tom.* 1. *ephemer. p.* 481.

humid signs, use to foretel prodigious rains; for he shews that there is nothing more groundless and uncertain than such observations: and he gives a famous and remarkable instance of that uncertainty to the eternal shame of astrology, which is this; John Staffler, as Cardan tells us, having observed such a conjunction of all the planets in Pisces, in the year 1524, foretold there should come a general flood; whereof several people being afraid, retired to the tops of high mountains, but without any cause, for there was never seen a greater serenity of weather.

3. Martinius was certainly mistaken, when he ascribed to Chuenhious the regulating the ephemerides of the five lesser planets; seeing there are no such ephemerides in *China*, according to all the relations we have of that country; nor yet any of the sun and moon, so exact as we have in *Europe:* a pregnant demonstration of which is, that the missionary Jesuits have been raised up to the dignity of the chiefest Mandarins in *China*, only because their skill and learning in astrology was found to exceed that of any the most learned men amongst the Chinese, by many degrees.

These things I thought fit to observe, to shew that there is nothing in the history of *China*, which they so much cry up, that can any ways invalidate the authority of Moses's accounts in his book of Genesis, but what rather confirms it, if it be considered with attention.

It was not without reason that I have supposed that the memory of those ancient transactions was conveyed, though confusedly, to the Chinese: we have already intimated one of those probable means of conveyance of this tradition, by their commerce with the Chaldeans, who were well informed of the greatest part of those several transactions, and who had great intercourse with the remotest nations of *Asia*, towards the east. To this we may add another argument, yet more certain and sure; which is the

continual commerce that always had been betwixt the *Indies* and *China*, and the communication which the inhabitants of the neighbouring countries of the Red Sea have always had with all the eastern nations in the world: for it is plain that this commerce gave a great opportunity of communicating to those eastern nations, the knowledge of all those passages which were known to the Chaldeans; just as the like commerce with the western nations of the world proved a means of conveying to them the knowledge of the most part of the same things, which in process of time became the ground of the most ancient fables amongst the Greeks, among whom those fables made up the best part of their divinity.

But, besides all this, we may mention here another very likely means of conveyance, viz. the commerce of the Chinese with the Tartars, among whom the Jews of the ten tribes were dispersed and settled, within a short time after their captivity in *Assyria;* for as those Jews had with them the books of Moses, so they easily gave a great insight and knowledge in ancient history to those nations that have appropriated it to themselves, as may be made out by comparing their fabulous history with those books of Moses, which contain in effect all that relates to the original of those nations.

But whatever judgment may be made of those forementioned means of conveying the ancient tradition to the Chinese, I think that I have good ground to affirm,

1. That the historians that have written the lives of the first emperors of *China* were not contemporaries with those emperors, and that consequently they have not recorded things so well known, as it was supposed.

2. That the fables intermixed in their histories do sufficiently evidence the easy and credulous temper

of those authors, which takes away from them all credit and belief.

3. That the greatest care of those authors was to persuade the world of the pretended antiquity of their nation, and so to raise the honour and reputation of it by glorious stories and fables.

4. That their affectation, in giving us an account of astronomy and judiciary astrology, was only to bring into credit and reputation those arts, the end and scope of which is to impose upon simple men; whcih is a ridiculous affectation, and such as hath exposed the Chaldeans and Egyptians to the just contempt and derision of all other nations.

5. That there is amongst them a diversity of opinions contrary to one another, about their antiquity; just as there were some amongst the Egyptians who reckoned up 23000 years from the reign of the Sun to Alexander, when some others reckoned but a little above 10000 years.

6. That the Chinese, according to one of their own opinions, must say that the earth was without almost any inhabitants for 30000 years together, and above: whereas we see that in the space of five or six thousand years it is become inhabited as we see it; and that, within a little more, it will be so overstocked, as that it will not be able to yield provisions enough for all its inhabitants, as a learned Englishman hath of late proved it by a mathematical demonstration; which shews that the Chinese wanted certain grounds to go upon, in several accounts which they give of many transactions, and in the relating of which they are besides most confident.

Lastly, that therefore what is reported, that these Chinese authors did all write with public allowance after every king's decease, might indeed be so about the latter times, as it was practised in *Egypt;* but that it is as absolutely false, that the Chinese had ever in former times such public historians, and as it is false that the Egyptians had formerly any such,

although they were as confident to say they had in Alexander's time, as the Chinese are now.

But this, I think, is sufficient for the clearing of that matter. We must now answer the last objection of Atheists against the authority of the Book of Genesis.

CHAP. XXI.

Wherein the last Objection of Atheists is answered.

As I intend to clear all the difficulties which may arise about this important matter, in the minds of those that shall peruse these observations; I think myself obliged to prevent and resolve the only plausible objection I know remaining, after all what I have said upon this subject.

Perhaps some will be apt to reply here, that they indeed confess Moses to be the author of Genesis, and that, if that book had really been suppositious, it could never have gone under his name, nor be received as his in after ages; but that yet all this does not prove sufficiently the truth of those transactions recorded in that book; because Moses may have forced upon the people of Israel the belief of them, by those laws that he enacted amongst them, by which it was death for any man to dare to contest the truth of any thing he had written in his books. This, I think, is all that the most contentious Atheists can think of, to undermine the authority of Moses's history.

But this objection is easily answered, for it confutes itself. For,

First, it supposes the truth of these great miracles by which God established Moses the head and captain of the people of Israel; which miracles are every

whit as hard to believe, as the several accounts of other things which we read of in the book of Genesis.

We find accordingly, amongst the heathens themselves, many monuments of those miracles done by the ministry of Moses, when he brought the Israelites out of *Egypt;* as I intend to shew in my observations upon the other four last books of Moses.

Secondly, they must at least suppose that Moses hath given a true account of several passages, in which he could not impose upon other nations, which did not acknowledge his authority; as, for example, all that relates to the building of the ark, the greatest piece of architecture that was then in the world; and to the raising of the tower of Babel, the greatest building that ever was, and part of which is yet extant; for all these things were as so many witnesses of the truth of those transactions which he related.

Thirdly, they must likewise suppose that he hath related several other passages as exactly as he did those; as, for example, that of the division of tongues, which is an appendix of the history of the tower of Babel; that of the destruction of *Sodom;* the original of the neighbouring nations of *Canaan,* that of the Jews, of the Moabites, of the Ammonites, of the Ishmaelites, and Edomites: for it is ridiculous to conceive that this lawgiver should ever hope to persuade other nations to believe any false stories about matters so well and so generally known as those were amongst themselves.

Fourthly, they must suppose further, that he hath given a true account of the original of the Israelites, whose head and governor he was. How great and absolute soever the authority of Moses might be, it is ridiculous to imagine that ever he would have derived the original of the Israelites from any other than from their true ancestors. This appears the more necessary, in that we see, by the accounts he gives of things and pedigrees in Genesis, that he wrote that book, especially from the history of Abraham on to

the end of it, only to shew the rights and just pretensions of the Israelites upon the land of *Canaan.*

Fifthly, they must yet further acknowledge, whether they will or not, the truth of the accounts he gives, concerning the original of the pretensions and divisions which were kept up amongst the twelve tribes of Israel: now these pretensions having no other ground than the oracles which are related in his history, they sufficiently prove the authority of those oracles, against all the pretensions and objections of the Atheists.

What violence soever they may pretend that Moses might use to force an implicit belief of his history and blind obedience to his laws, yet no man of common sense and reason can ever think that he would have filled the accounts he gives of things of that nature, with lies, or that, if he had done it he could ever have expected that his false accounts of them should ever have been credited by the neighbouring nations, or even by his own subjects.

But without urging here several other absurdities, which plainly shew that there is no distinction to be found betwixt the accounts of things which Moses recites as publicly known, and those which he relates of his own head, and private knowledge; there being, as I have already shewed, betwixt all those several accounts, such a natural coherence and necessary concatenation, that they cannot be divided from one another, without destroying the whole frame of his history; I say, that it is impossible that the law by which he makes it death for any one to contest the truth of his narration, should make the sincerity of it suspected.

I do not urge here, that there is an evident absurdity to suppose that Moses would ever have related together all those transactions, as the grounds of religion, if they had been absolutely unknown in the world before him.

Neither do I mention here, that suppose Moses

had been so imprudent as to attempt such an undertaking, yet there is no reason to believe that a whole nation, and that a very numerous one, would have long persevered in a profession forced upon them by mere violence and tyranny.

Nor do I think it necessary to observe here, that the people of Israel were neither so patient, nor so easily persuaded by Moses, nor yet so submissive to him, as these objectors do imagine.

That is plain, and apparent enough from all their seditions and conspiracies against him.

Nor do I judge it necessary to observe here what is plain enough of itself, viz. that Moses had no successor any ways concerned to countenance and defend these pretended fictions and fables of his history. Joshua, his immediate successor, was of another tribe; and so were all the succeeding governors of Israel, until the Maccabees came.

But what I think deserves best to be observed here, is, that after Moses and Joshua's decease the people of Israel was brought under the subjection of the Canaanites, and consequently freed from the terror of that law of Moses's making, by which it was death for any one to contest the authority of his laws, and the truth of all his writings: there is but a little more than forty years interval betwixt the conquest of *Canaan* by Joshua, and the bondage of the Israelites under the neighbouring nations. Had it not been a fit time then, to cast off the yoke of Moses's laws, and to publish the pretended lies and impostures of his history? Was not the comparison which the Israelites could easily make betwixt the Mosaic writings, and the tradition generally received in the country of their captivity, a natural and ready means to undeceive them?

Yet, notwithstanding all this, we see that they obstinately entertain the belief of the several transactions recorded by Moses, and stand firmly to all their pretensions: nay, we see them have recourse to the

remedy of repentance which Moses prescribed them to use in those sad misfortunes which he foretold should befall them, and out of which he promised, at the same time, that God would miraculously deliver them; which indeed was done accordingly, even fourteen times within less than four hundred years, as is manifest from the book of Judges.

Can there then be a more pregnant argument, that if Moses made it death, by one of his sanctions, for any of the Israelites to contest the truth either of his writings, or of his oracles and miracles, it was not to force the belief of them without examination, but rather only to prevent the corruption of that people, and their mingling and confounding themselves with the heathens, which God intended to hinder on purpose, because he would have the Messiah to be born, according to his promise, out of that nation; which to effect, he thought fit, in his infinite wisdom, to employ the rigour of some capital laws, to keep that people unmixed and distinguished from all other nations of the world, till the Messiah was born?

CHAP. XXII.

The Consequences of what we have proved in our foregoing Observations upon the Book of Genesis.

THESE several observations which I have made upon the Book of Genesis, are all, I think, very natural and easy; and, if I am not mistaken, sufficient to prove solidly the truth of Moses's account, of the creation of the world, and of the promise of the Messiah, which is the foundation of the Christian religion.

The conclusion that I draw out of the premises is, that,

First, I assert, that Moses, that famous Hebrew

who was designed to be the heir of Pharaoh's daughter, is the true and sole author of the book of Genesis.

Secondly, I maintain, that this being once granted, he could not, according to his way of writing, record those important transactions he relates, otherwise than they really came to pass.

Thirdly, I maintain, that though he had not been an eye-witness of the creation of the world, yet he hath made the description of it according to such an authentic tradition as cannot be reasonably doubted of, because it was then the universal tradition, not only of the Moabites, of the Ammonites, of the Ishmaelites, and of the Edomites, who were all of Shem's posterity, and amongst whom he had been travelling for forty years together; but also of the Egyptians, of his own people, and, in a word, of all men then living in the world.

Fourthly, I maintain, that he never was found fault with, nor contradicted, till true reason and sense, if I may say so, was lost and banished from amongst mankind, till the Egyptians, for example, they who used before to look upon the Greeks as mere children and idiots, were fallen into so great a stupidity and depravation of sense, as to believe and maintain that men were first born in *Egypt*, because, forsooth, frogs did naturally, as they thought, breed out of their muddy fens and marshes.

Fifthly, I maintain, that for many ages after Moses nobody did ever publicly declare for the eternity of the world, nor yet for its fortuitous production. These opinions are mere absurdities and chimeras, brought forth into the world by the Chaldeans and Greeks, only about Alexander's time, or perhaps an hundred years before him, i. e. about eleven or twelve hundred years after Moses's decease.

Sixthly, I maintain, that seeing there is no particular time to be found wherein the reading of the law was interrupted and discontinued for any considerable time amongst the Jews; seeing it continues still to

this very hour amongst them every sabbath-day, in the several places of the world wherein they are dispersed; and seeing besides, that it is certain that this law, which enjoins the observation of the sabbath, in remembrance of the creation, could never be imposed upon them, without their perceiving and declaring presently the novelty and supposition of that account, and consequently of the book wherein it is related;---seeing all this is certain, I do positively maintain, that the truth of the creation can never be better proved, than it is by the book of Genesis, because in it Moses hath followed the tradition of all the ages that preceded him, and only recorded in writing, what was then generally known of all men in the world: and that, in a time when every man was able to run his own pedigree up to Adam.

Lastly, I maintain, that as the certainty of the creation cannot reasonably be doubted of, without rejecting at the same time all those proofs from facts which I have brought to strengthen my assertion, so there is all the reason in the world to entertain the belief of it, as a matter of fact which is indisputable; as being related by the most ancient historian, confirmed by the most ancient tradition, believed by the most ancient people of the world, who did not only believe it, but also had always had, according to God's command, the memory of it celebrated amongst them and their ancestors, in all their generations, fifty-two times in a year, from the very beginning of the world.

REFLECTIONS

UPON THE

Books of the Holy Scripture,

TO ESTABLISH THE TRUTH

OF THE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

PART SECOND.

ON THE FOUR LAST BOOKS OF MOSES.

PREFACE.

WHEN I began at first these Reflections upon the Book of Genesis, I designed only to demonstrate the certainty of the creation of the first man, and so to shew, by arguments from matters of fact, that neither the creation of the world, nor yet the promise of the Messiah, which God made to man after his sin, can reasonably be disputed or doubted of.

I designed, after that, to establish the truth of Christ's resurrection, by such another undeniable argument, viz. by shewing that the apostles were eye-witnesses of it, and instituted a solemn day in every week to celebrate and perpetuate the memory of it, amongst men, from their time down to the end of the world. And this I thought was sufficient to demonstrate the truth of the Christian religion: for as the Jews, by the continual celebration of the sabbath every week, could easily run back to the creation of the world, which was the occasion of the institution of the sabbath, so the Christians may, by the weekly observation of the Lord's day, prove Christ's resurrection, which occasioned the institution of the Lord's day. If we consider the thing in itself, there is no less absurdity to dispute our Saviour's resurrection, than the creation of the first man.

Now if this argument holds, as there can be no easier, so neither can there be a stronger proof of the truth of the Christian religion; for, provided we be once well assured of the certainty of Christ's resurrection, we must acknowledge him to be the true Messiah, and consequently embrace his religion.

But it seems, in the heat of meditation, I was insensibly carried further in my observations upon the promise of the Messiah, than I thought at first to be. Therefore, instead of passing now, as I proposed in the beginning, to the proof of Christ's resurrection, which is a solid and compendious way of demonstrating the truth of his religion, I find myself engaged, according to my present method, to continue to make the like Reflections upon the other Books of Holy Scripture, that I may yet more fully demonstrate that Jesus Christ is the true Messiah, whom God promised to man immediately after his sin.

And this I intend to shew so plainly, as will make it evident that God hath really accomplished his first designs, and exactly performed all his promises relating to the Messiah, according to the first ideas he gave of his coming, to the ancient Patriarchs.

First, then, I design to trace up the method that God was pleased to use, to make the Messiah known without mistake, whenever he should come into the world.

Secondly, I will make some Reflections upon the several notions he gave of him long before, in his oracles, to characterise his person, his offices, his actions, his sufferings, his glory, &c.

Last of all, I will shew that we have all this whole project and design exactly accomplished in the history of the Gospel, as it was written by Christ's disciples. Now, as this method which God hath particularly chosen to make the Messiah known, appears also in the other Books of Moses; so I think it will not be amiss for me particularly to view and examine these Books, that I may have occasion to illustrate several

things in them which deserve a particular attention, especially when they are considered together, and as it were at one view.

For the prophecies being thus considered together in their connection and progress, do more plainly evidence God's design, and may better convince or confound the Jews. Therefore I intend accordingly to consider those oracles with attention, and to join them together, that so they may in their conjunction cast forth the brighter beams of light, the conviction of all infidels who may happen to peruse this book.

For I am persuaded that, after the perusal of my observations in it, an ordinary attention in the reading of the Gospel will be sufficient to convince any man that Jesus Christ is the true Messiah, which is all I intend to prove, as the conclusion of this Treatise.

Now as the examination of the Patriarch's religion according to the account Moses hath given us of it in his book of Genesis, hath taken up the first part of it; so I design to examine in this second part the Israelite's religion, and to follow in my search the account which Moses gives of it in his other four Books.

And as, to effect this, it is very important to establish beforehand the authority of those four Books; so I intend to shew, first of all, that Moses is the true author of them, and that they have intrinsic characters of undeniable certainty.

Then, secondly, it will be natural for me to shew, that Moses, in the writing of them, had the promise of the Messiah in view, as particularly promised of God to the Patriarchs of his own nation, and as being consequently the principal, if not the sole object of their hope.

Thirdly, I intend to shew, that if we seriously examine Moses's laws, we shall find in them such a method observed, as is both very agreeable to the

manifestation of God's design in Genesis, and very worthy of his wisdom, especially if we consider what he was pleased to reveal unto us, of his intentions, by the Prophets who followed Moses.

REFLECTIONS,

&c. &c.

PART SECOND.

ON THE FOUR LAST BOOKS OF MOSES.

CHAP. I.

That it cannot reasonably be doubted, but that Moses is the Author of Exodus, and of the three other following Books.

THIS is a truth which may be grounded upon several solid arguments.

I might observe, That Moses hath always been acknowledged, by the very heathens themselves, not only to be the most ancient historian, but also the most ancient legislator in the world.

I might likewise observe, That there is a particular connection betwixt the book of Genesis and the other books of Moses, as well in regard of the general design of their author, as of the matters treated of in them. For example, we see that the greatest part of the laws and transactions which we find written and recorded there, derive their original from those transactions and passages that we read of in Genesis.

Thus we may plainly discern that the pretension of the Israelites upon the land of *Canaan*, was grounded upon the promise that God made to Abraham to give it to his posterity, in the fourth generation. Thus we may see that the Amalekites could have no other reason to make war against the Israelites, than the old alliance that was formerly made betwixt Amalek and the Canaanites, which without doubt engaged his posterity to be the first opposers of the establishment of the Israelites in the land of *Canaan*. Thus we see that the seditions of the Israelites against Moses, under Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, did proceed from the order of the birth of the children of Israel, as it is set down in Genesis, because the eldest, thinking themselves wronged of their birthright, thought they might justly rebel against Moses in order to recover it.

But I haste to things more material than these. And, first, it is here observable, that those books were not only religiously kept in every family of Israel, but that they were also once solemnly deposited in the tabernacle as a public record, and that by Moses himself, a little before his death, that they might be a testimony against that people, as we read in Deuteronomy xxxi. 26.

Secondly, it cannot be denied that Moses did straitly charge both Joshua and the heads of the people to read them frequently and carefully, for it is expressly said so, Josh. i. 8. Nay, we see, about 500 years after, the holy man David, who had made during his life, the supreme felicity of a man to consist in the reading of the law of God day and night* —we see, I say, that holy man give on his death-bed the same charge to Solomon, 1 Kings.

Thirdly, moreover, it is certain that there were many laws and sanctions contained in those books, which are the foundation of the history of succeeding

* Psal. i.

times: and this is the reason why we read nothing in the book of Joshua concerning the several blessings and curses which were to be pronounced upon the mounts *Ebal* and *Gerizim*, because the form of them was to be borrowed from the books of Moses, which were public and authentic. The same reflection may be made upon the law of the first-fruits, and upon the prayer which was to be made upon the tithes of the third year; as likewise upon many other laws.

Fourthly, it is certain that those books were read over every seventh year, according to the injunction of that law which we find in Deuteronomy xxxi. 10, 11. which was commanded to be done for the instruction of posterity, as it is intimated in the thirteenth verse of the same chapter. Whereupon it may not be preposterous to consider here, God's methods, to prevent all forgery and imposture in this matter.

We see that it was, during the longevity of human life, a constant and universal custom amongst all the Patriarchs, to Moses's time, to put (when they lay on their death-beds) their posterity in mind of the most important truths, and of the fundamental articles of religion; because, as all admonitions and exhortations made at such a time are always looked upon as sincere, so they seldom fail of being favourably construed and better entertained than they would be at any other time. We have, as instances of this ancient custom, the examples of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, of Joseph, &c. who in that, I make no doubt, followed the custom of their pious ancestors, who, in all likelihood, derived it from Adam himself. That custom, we see, was of an admirable use to perpetuate the memory of illustrious transactions: what was then spoken by those pious venerable men, was a kind of a public sermon, because it was delivered before those numerous families which met then

all together about the bed of their common head and father; and that, upon such an occasion as did extraordinarily excite their attention.

To this custom succeeded another, which was, that when the greatest captains and judges of the people of Israel were sensible of their approaching death, then they usually called the people together, to give them such exhortations, reproofs, admonitions, as they judged most proper, either for their encouragement, or for their reformation; nay, and that even in some occasions many of them have affected to have their speeches made public, and deposited in the tabernacle: thus did Moses and Joshua, and the greatest number of the Judges, and Samuel, and Solomon, &c.

We know that the books of Moses were formerly read every sabbath-day, as St. James doth attest it in Acts xv. And though there be no express command about it in Moses's writings, yet we find there something equivalent to it, in the strict charge given by him to all the people, to be continually conversant in his books, and to instruct their families at all times in the laws and doctrines delivered in them; for it is plain, that if the Israelites were bound by that command of Moses to read his books every day, they were more particularly obliged, by the same command to read them on the sabbath-day, which was made a day of rest by God, particularly on purpose that all men might the better attend on that day to the reading and meditating God's laws, and the performing all other religious duties.

We know besides that those books were continually explained both by the doctors of the law, and the Levites, who were on purpose dispersed through the whole land of *Canaan*, that they might the better attend and perform the duties of their ministry.

We see that Moses in his writings hath exactly kept a kind of journal, which cannot easily receive any alteration. If we read hereupon what relates to

the sojourning of the Israelites, and the several removals of their tents in the desert, we shall be easily convinced by the very form and style of those books, as we have them now, that they were formerly publicly received, and were exactly transcribed out of the original, and that, if in process of time they suffered any alteration, it was only as to some appendixes or postscripts inserted by Ezra, or some other Prophet, by way of explication.

We see in those books a history written without disguise or partiality, exact in relating all circumstances, of places, times, and persons, even in the narration of things of small importance for the main drift of the author; there are, besides, some passages recorded in them, which any author who lived after Moses's time would certainly have left out, if for no other reason, yet at least to abolish the memory of some actions dishonourable to some great families, and whole tribes of *Israel*.

Again, we read in them the songs and other public monuments which were made upon extraordinary occasions, to preserve the memory of them the better.

I have but three observations more to make here, and then I have done with this chapter.

The first is, that those books have been constantly quoted by all the authors amongst that people who followed Moses, and that their quotations do exactly agree with the text of those books, as we have them now; which is a certain sign, as well of the sincerity, as of the antiquity of that author. They were as much esteemed in *Israel* as in *Judah*, both people did observe them as their law: the Prophets that arose from time to time, did always, and upon all occasions, acknowledge and maintain their authority.

Thus we find in the book of Joshua, quoted out of them, what relates to the curses and blessings, to the prophecies, and divisions of the land of *Canaan* amongst the tribes of Israel. The whole history of the thirteen judges whom God raised up amongst the

people, is nothing, in general, but an account of the accomplishment of that promise which God hath formerly made to Moses, to raise up from among that people such men, in the time of their afflictions and captivities, as would be the assertors of their liberty.

We see there, in particular, the execution of Moses's order concerning Caleb, and of that law in Deuteronomy which prescribes the manner of dismissing from the army those that are fearful and faint-hearted, and of that other concerning the Nazarites,* &c.

Thus we see, that the rules and laws prescribed in those books continued in force in the time of Ruth, David's great grandmother, that appears plainly by their observation of those laws which enjoined the next kinsman to take to wife the widow of his deceased relation, and to redeem his inheritance. As for David and Solomon, they are continually alluding to something or other delivered in those books; Nehemiah quotes them in chap. xiii. of his book, and that was in the year of the world 3563; and so does Malachi in chapter iv. and v. of his prophecy, in the year 3580.

The second observation, which is very material, is, that the author of those books hath inserted in them an express prohibition of adding any thing to them, as we see it Deuteronomy iv. 2.

It is then impossible, seeing that the whole people of the Jews have always acknowledged the Divine authority of those books, that they should ever have attempted the alteration of any thing in them.

Nay, we see, not without wonder, that after the greatest part of the ten tribes of Israel were transported into *Assyria*, those that were sent from *Assyria* to inhabit their country, did receive that law, and that their posterity have kept it all along to this day, as uncorrupted as the Jews, although they con-

* Judg. i. 20. Judg. vii. 3. Judg. xiii. 3.

tinue their mortal enemies, and have been exposed to all the changes and revolutions that can befall a nation, during the long interval of 2400 years.

The third observation, which deserves a singular attention, is, that notwithstanding the great and many corruptions which the commonwealth of *Israel* fell into, yet these books have still been kept up in the same form that we have them now: it appears out of the history of Josiah, related 2 Kings, xxiii. 21. that after the book of the law, of Moses's own writing, was found in the temple, the king commanded all the people to keep the passover unto the Lord, *as it is written in the book of this covenant:* now we have the institution of the passover, Exod. xii. which shews that Josiah, by the book of this covenant, meant the books of Moses, such as we have them nowadays, and such as they were when Moses deposited them in the sanctuary.

It is important to consider well all that is related in the formentioned chapter of 2 Kings; for we may gather out of it that it was according to the directions of this law that they began to reform all the superstitions and idolatries which had been introduced in their religion, and countenanced by the royal authority, from Solomon's time to Josiah: this chapter relates and commends the proceeding of Josiah, only in opposition to the ill government of his predecessors, and to the public monuments of their superstitions, which he abolished in obedience to God's laws, contained in the books of Moses.

However, it is certain, that it was no easy matter to impose herein upon posterity.

For, first, the transactions recorded in the books of Moses did not only relate to the people of *Israel,* but also to most of the neighbouring nations.

Secondly, the memory of them continued so lively and universal, that, almost 1500 years after Moses, the names of those magicians spoken of, Exod. vii. 11. were as yet known, not only amongst the

Jews, as we see it by an express passage of St. Paul, who speaks of them, and mentioneth their names, 2 Tim. iii. 8.; but also among the heathens, as both Pliny and Numenius do attest it.*

I point only at those general proofs at present, because I have already made use of them, and shewed their force in my observations upon Genesis, and because I intend to repeat and improve some of them hereafter in this treatise. But now, in order to follow my present design, I must come to the more particular consideration of the things contained in these books, which will much conduce to the confirmation of the same truth.

CHAP. II.

That both the Character of Moses's Person, and the Nature of the Things he relates, have always made Men read his Books with Attention.

THE subject of some books is such, as that alone would recommend them to the attention of any reader, though their author had no reputation in the world; but when, besides the importance of their subject, the author of them is famous and of great repute, then, to be sure, they never fail to be read with serious attention, and preserved with as great a care. The books of Moses have both these advantages, so that they cannot reasonably be suspected of the least alteration or forgery.

The first character that we discover in these books, at the first viewing of them, is the great singularity and admirable diversity of their style, and of the matters they treat of.

We do not see that other legislators did ever affect

* Hist. Nat. l. 30. c. 1.

to act the parts of historians; no, they content themselves with their absolute power to make laws, without giving any reason for the sanction of them; therefore we see that there is commonly nothing more dry and sapless than all their regulations, about both civil and religious matters.

But Moses, we see, hath followed a more reasonable and more satisfactory method: all his regulations are grounded upon the great transactions he relates; he enacts no law of any consequence, but he intimates to the Jews, at the same time, the reasons which challenge their obedience, and makes them by that means reflect both upon the several mercies of God bestowed upon them, and call to mind the great miracles of which they had been eye-witnesses.

I confess, indeed that the use and scope of some of his regulations is very abstruse, especially now that we are ignorant of the several heathen customs which God designed to abolish from among that people newly come out of *Egypt*, where during their captivity they had complied and accustomed themselves in a great measure to the rites and religion of their masters the Egyptians. But yet, how abstruse soever the design of some of those laws may now appear to be, we have good ground to affirm, that the general scope of them all was, to keep that people from idolatry in distinguishing them from all other nations, as also to quicken their desires and expectations of the Messiah, the promise of whose coming had been made by God in the very beginning of the world, and renewed several times to the heads of their nation.

However, we see in the books of those laws, religion and policy so interwoven together, that the latter seems to subsist only by the support and assistance of the former; which is contrary to the custom of human legislators, who do not so much regard the establishment of religion, as the preservation and welfare of the state and commonwealth.

If any Jew had a mind to be informed about the tradition of his ancestors, and the transactions of old, Moses hath preserved it with such care, with so many marks of fidelity, and so clear and plain, that there is no other history besides his, that can give any satisfactory information about the original of things; all the fables of the heathens, which yet make up the most ancient tradition they have, being nothing else but a corruption and depravation of the several truths that Moses relates in his history.

If any Jew desired to see the beginnings of that commonwealth of which he was a member, Moses gives an accurate account of them.

If any Jew desired to know the original of mankind, or what was the true happiness of man, and what he ought to do, in order to be a partaker of that happiness, Moses teaches all that with great evidence and exactness.

If any Jew had a mind to know the occasion of those songs that were so much in fashion among those of his nation, he might easily satisfy his curiosity, by reading Moses's history.

If any Jew desired to know what sort of exhortations they were, which the Founder both of their religion and commonwealth had formerly made to their fore-fathers, Moses relates a great many of them in his books.

If any Jew had a mind to receive instruction about the original and cause of those temporal blessings he enjoyed in the land of *Canaan*, which God had possessed his nation of, after the expulsion of those people that had been the inhabitants of it for many ages, Moses gives as good account of all that, as can be desired.

If any Jew had a mind to know the original of the several calamities that befell his nation on several occasions, Moses acquainted them both with the cause and remedy of their afflictions.

Lastly, if the Jews desired to be informed of the future condition of their commonwealth in after ages, Moses foretells it in so particular and clear a manner, that they might look upon his prophecies, not as certain prophecies only, but as a plain history of future events, begun and traced out before their accomplishment.

All this is so much the more considerable, to oblige us to read the books of Moses with care, that we may justly observe three things in his person, which as they raise him above all common authors, so they cannot but strengthen the belief, and increase the esteem and veneration, which we ought to have for his history.

The first is, that whereas all men are careful to conceal their own infirmities, and whatever is dishonourable to their families, Moses on the contrary seems to have affected to record all the things that could blemish the memory of his ancestors, and derogate to his own reputation. He blemishes Jacob's memory, by his relating how he preferred Joseph, the son of his beloved wife, to Reuben his eldest, whom he unjustly deprived of his birth-right, in favour of the other; which injustice is expressly forbidden by one of Moses's laws.

Thus he lays an eternal blot and reproach upon the memory of Levi, the head of his own family, when he mentions his cruelty and violence against the Sichemites, and the dispersion of his posterity amongst the other tribes of *Israel.*

Nay, what is more, he vilifies his own birth, by forbidding any marriage betwixt an aunt and her nephew, seeing he relates that he himself was born of Jocabed, both aunt and wife to his father Amram; he describes his own incredulity with all the ingenuity imaginable, when he represents the several miracles which God wrought by him; he seems to speak of himself, only to lay open his own failings and sins.

Such a sincerity and impartiality, we know, confirms and increases mightily the authority of any author.

The second thing is, that Moses, not regarding the advantage and honour of his own family, left the government of *Israel* to Joshua, one of the tribe of Ephraim, and so reduced his own children and their posterity to the low condition of the rest of the Levites, who were of an interior rank to that of priests; for we do not see that they ever after renewed the pretensions which they might otherwise have had to succeed Moses. Now, such neglect of his family shews that Moses's principles were raised much above the ordinary pitch of the generality of lawgivers, who were absoluie and supreme over their people.

The third thing observable here is, that Moses had no share in the conquest in the land of *Canaan;* it all was subdued after his death: nay, it was that conquest that fixed and settled the commonwealth of *Israel*, which was before unsettled, and as it were ambulatory in the desert. Now, how could such a singular design, as Moses describes in his law, be put in execution by any other than by him that formed it? It was Joshua that made this conquest of the land of *Canaan*, and possessed the Jews of it. Now, to be sure, if that people had not been then fully persuaded of the Divine authority of Moses's law, they would never have failed, after so great an alteration, to make use of their power and liberty in throwing off the troublesome yoke of his laws; nor yet would Joshua, and all his successors in the government, ever have maintained the authority of those laws, if they had not looked upon Moses, not only as an extraordinary man, but also as one particularly commissionated by God to make that body of laws for the regulating of his people.

We read, in those books, of Moses's dying in the mountains of *Moab:* now, that being supposed, how is it possible, that if the people of *Israel* had not

been fully convinced that God himself gave their law to Moses with all the circumstances mentioned by him, they would have continued to keep up such a ridiculous and ill-grounded conceit? If he had really by his tyrannical authority forced the Israelites into a compliance to his laws during his life, why did they not, as soon as he was dead, with the fear of his authority, shake off the yoke of his laws, and all respect for his memory?

One thing we may remark as very surprising in the relation of that legislator's death, which is, that his body was not found after his death.

For we do not see that that people, which otherwise kept up and carried about with so much care, the bones of Joseph and his brethren, in order to bury and deposit them in the sepulchres of their ancestors (for both Joseph and his brethren were interred in Judea), did ever build a tomb to their lawgiver, or so much as pretend to shew his sepulchre.

Josephus was of opinion that Moses wrote himself the account of his own death, for fear the Jews should ever imagine, and so give out, that God had taken him up into heaven. I see, I confess, no solidity in that conjecture of his; but yet it may give us occasion to make a reflection hereupon, I think, more natural and easy, which is, that God had a mind, as Joshua intimates it, to confirm the many characters of divinity that appeared in the law of Moses, by taking away from before the eyes of the Jews his corpse, which they would certainly, if they had not been so prevented, have kept with more care than those of all their patriarchs and kings. The description of the manner of Moses's death, shews evidently that he was not only in great esteem during his life, but that even his death did much conduce to the increase of it, and to make men look upon him as one gloriously raised up above the common condition of men, and in a manner not obnoxious to the infirmities and miseries incident to human nature.

But after these general reflections, I must come to those that are more particular.

CHAP. III.

That the Truth of the Miracles related by Moses cannot reasonably be doubted of.

WHOEVER will examine with attention the four last books of Moses, shall find in them several passages recorded, which deserve a particular consideration.

As, first of all, the miraculous birth, the extraordinary education, the heroical courage, and the Divine call and commission of Moses, and the several miracles which he wrought in *Egypt*, to bring the Israelites out of it, and lead them to the borders of *Canaan*.

Then, secondly, all the moral, ceremonial, and political laws, which Moses gave to that people from God.

And, lastly, Moses's prophecies concerning their future condition, their victories, their captivities, their transportations, concerning the destruction of *Jerusalem*, the coming of the Messiah, and the dispersion of their whole nation.

All which passages have as evident and authentic proofs of their certainty, as things of that nature are capable of.

Let us first begin with the narration of the miracles recorded in the beginning of Exodus.

Wherein we see, that after Moses had represented the death of Joseph, and of all the generation that came down with Jacob into *Egypt*, he writes his own history, and represents himself as another Noah, saved out of the waters, to save and deliver that holy family.

The whole relation which he makes of all those particulars, is very strange and extraordinary; but yet his circumcision, and the instruction of his mother, to whom he was given by the daughter of Pharaoh, to be nursed up; and the conversation of that princess, who had adopted him, and made herself a proselyte, as the Jews endeavour to prove from 1 Chron. iv. 18.;* and his education in the court of *Egypt*, and his acquaintance with all the grandees of that court; did concur together to acquaint him with that remarkable preservation of his person, and persuade him of the certainty of it.

For how could Moses either impose, or be imposed upon, in that matter? Was not that barbarous cruelty of the Egyptians by which they compelled the Jews, about the time of Moses's birth, to throw their children into the river *Nilus*, notoriously known of all men? Were not the public buildings, and strong cities, viz. *Pythom* and *Ramases*, so called from the name of king Ramases Miamum, standing in the sight of all men? And was it not publicly known by all the world, that the poor Israelites were the slaves and drudges who were made use of to erect those buildings?

Neither could the manner of his education be unknown to him, nor yet to any of the Hebrews; for we do not join here to Moses's narration, what Josephus relates of his person, of his feats in *Meroe*, and of his marrying an Ethiopian princess, &c.

As Moses's miracles were done in the presence of the Egyptians and Jews, so they testify that he had really received his calling and commission from God in the desert; and that, just in the manner as he describes it himself.

Now, no man can dispute the truth of those miracles, if he but minds the following considerations.

First, it cannot be denied that the people of Israel were brought out of *Egypt* by Moses. Their law,

* Jalk. in h. l. *ex Vajikra Rab.*

which the present Jews do still observe, speaks every where of that famous action of his; there was never any man disputed the certainty of that achievement. All ancient authors make mention of it; Manethon* gives an account of the time, of the manner, and of many other principal circumstances of that exploit.

Trogus Pompeius, Justinus, and Tacitus, do also speak of it. Only Tacitus does groundlessly, I suppose, of his own head, relate, that the Jews were expelled out of *Egypt*, because of their leprosy: I say groundlessly, for it is known that on the contrary leprosy was a common distemper among the Egyptians, and that they infected the Israelites with it; so that there is no likelihood they should be expelled by the Egyptians for a distemper that they got from them.

We know, besides, that the law of Moses which calls the leprosy the distemper of *Egypt*, did banish the lepers out of the congregation of the people; and then the nature of David's curses against Joab, because of his murdering Abner, shews sufficiently that the leprosy was looked upon by the Jews as a distemper most commonly sent immediately from God. Nay, Trogus Pompeius† himself observes that the magicians caused Moses, with the people of Israel, to be expelled, because they themselves were struck with a kind of scab and itch; and that they were afraid lest the contagion of it should infect the whole kingdom of *Egypt*.‡

And here I must not forget the mentioning the testimony of Numenius, a Pythagorean philosopher, who relates that both Jannes and Jambres were chosen by the Egyptians, to oppose Moses, and hinder the effects of his miracles and prayers, which had brought down many grievous plagues upon *Egypt*, just about the time of the Jews' banishment out of that country.

* Joseph *contra* App. l. 1. † Justin. l. 36.
‡ Euseb. præp. Evang. l. 9. c. 8.

But secondly, if the leprosy which the Israelites brought from *Egypt*, be an indisputable proof of their sojourning there; it is as certain, that the going out of that mixed multitude of Egyptians, who so far espoused the Israelites' interest, as to leave and forsake *Egypt*, their own country, to accompany them, could have no other cause or pretence than the miracles of Moses, whereof they had been eye-witnesses; so that the posterity of those Egyptians that were thus incorporated into the body of the people of Israel, were in after ages as so many witnesses of the truth of those miracles which formerly persuaded their fathers to join with Moses, and so to share fortune with the Hebrews.

Thirdly, it is certain, that the Jews could not so much as mention any of the miracles which they pretended were done formerly for the deliverance of their fathers, without exposing themselves to the scorn of all the world, if all those miracles, and their deliverance, had not been certainly and generally known to the Egyptians, and to all the neighbouring nations, by whom they were often subdued and brought into subjection after the decease of Moses and Joshua.

To all these reflections we may add, that the commemoration of the Israelites going out of *Egypt*, with all the miracles wrought by Moses, was renewed yearly, not only by the solemnizing the feast of the passover, which the Israelites did constantly keep to the time of their dispersion, and which they do still keep in all parts of the world, but also by two other very sensible ways.

The first whereof, was the separation which God made of the tribe of Levi, in order to consecrate it to his service, instead of the first-born of the people of Israel, whom he had spared and preserved in *Egypt*, with great solemnity, in regard both of men and beasts, as we read, Numb. iii. so that every Levite

was as a living memorial of that great miracle, wrought at the Israelites going out of *Egypt*.

And the second was the law concerning the redemption of every first-born, both of men and unclean beasts;* which is observed to this hour among the Jews. It is clear and evident, that there is in all those laws, a deep impression of those several great miracles which compelled Pharaoh to let the Israelites go.

Lastly, it is very observable here, that the memory of the deliverance of Israel out of *Egypt*, wrought, as by many miracles, so especially by the death of all the first-born of *Egppt*, which was the occasion of the institution of the passover, continued amongst the Egyptians till after Jesus Christ: for till then they used to mark with red their sheep, their trees, their houses, and lands, the day before the passover, as any one may see in Epiphanius; which custom could proceed from no other cause, than from the Egyptians' fear of the like plague and mortality that was once inflicted upon their forefathers, and from their hope of preventing it by such a kind of talisman whereby they thought Moses had formerly saved the Israelites harmless from that great plague, only by sprinkling the blood of the lamb of the passover on the upper door-post of their houses.

CHAP. IV.

A Continuation of the Proofs of the Truth of the Miracles wrought by Moses.

THESE arguments might be thought sufficient for the evincing the truth of these miracles which Moses relates; but yet something more may be added.

* Numb. xviii. 16.

As those stupendous miracles by which the famous deliverance of the Israelites was effected, could not be doubted of by those who had been eye-witnesses of them; so they were afterwards confirmed by several other miracles, which, being as great, and almost of the same kind, continued for many years in the sight of the whole people of Israel.

God made a pillar of fire, and of a cloud, attend upon the Israelites, to guide them, the one by day, the other by night. He divided the Red Sea, to open a passage through it for his people; the memory whereof (saith Eusebius) was preserved to this time, by those of Memphis:* the Israelites took the spoils of the Egyptians drowned in the Red Sea, as they were pursuing them: they made a song upon the occasion of that wonderful deliverance; they were fed with *manna*, a kind of heavenly and miraculous food; they drank of that brook of water that was following them wherever they went. All those miracles, with many others, continued for forty years together without any interruption, and do therefore firmly establish the truth of those other miracles which Moses relates, because there were none of them wherein the people could be imposed upon by any trick or illusion, and of the truth whereof every one could not satisfy himself, by his own experience.

I do not speak now of several public monuments of those miracles; as, for example, the rod of Aaron which blossomed in a night; the manna which was kept in the tabernacle; the brazen serpent, which, having continued to Hezekiah's time, was broken down by him, only because the people offered incense to it.

From all which it must be acknowledged, that there was in the whole series of the Jewish history, both many pregnant evidences of the truth of the

* L. 9. *præp. Ev. cap. ult.*

first miracles, and a constant series of miracles which, having been foretold by Moses, did the better confirm the truth of those which he relates as done by him on purpose to vindicate and defend the liberty and honour of the people of Israel.

Because I did just now intimate that the memory of the Jewish deliverance did continue for many ages after, amongst the Egyptians, I think myself obliged to add here some arguments, to prove that neither such a transaction as that was, nor yet any of the like nature and importance, could ever be forgotten in the land of *Canaan*.

There is nothing that in outward appearance seems more ridiculous, than what is related concerning the Gibeonites coming to Joshua's camp; their equipage shewed that they had a mind to persuade the Israelites that they came from a far country. The treaty which they extorted from Joshua by fraud, is very singular.

And there can be nothing more remarkable than their subsistence amongst the people of Israel, notwithstanding that they were of the number of those nations which God had commanded to be destroyed; and their being destined, by Joshua's appointment, to carry the wood and the water necessary for the service of the tabernacle, from whence they were denominated Nethinims, and thereby for ever after distinguished from the Israelites.

But after all, there could be nothing more agreeable to God's wisdom, than the preservation of that people amongst the Israelites. Their fathers were the witnesses of Moses and Joshua's miracles. Those miracles obliged them to seek the alliance of the Hebrews, and to cheat them into it by a fraudulent treaty, because they despaired of compassing their design by any other means. Therefore their subsisting amongst the Jews, and their servile office which exposed them to the eyes of the whole nation, could not choose but be of an extraordinary use, to make that people preserve and cherish up the memory of

those glorious actions which every Gibeonite had perpetually before his eyes.

The same remark may be made upon the continuing of Rahab's family amongst the Israelites, after the destruction of Jericho.

It is certain that the Jews have always believed, that, besides those first miracles related by Moses, many others have been done since for their sakes, both to possess them of the land of *Canaan*, and to keep or restore them to the possession of it: nay, of those latter miracles many are very like unto the former; as, for example, the death of 185,000 men in the army of Sennacherib; the returning of the shadow backwards ten degrees upon the sun-dial of Ahaz; the wonderful preservation of the whole nation by the means of Esther, which was the occasion of the institution of the feast of Purim amongst them; and several other miraculous transactions related in the Jewish authors, of which I will only name three, which did preserve the memory of the greatest and most important miracles related by Moses.

The first is the continual miracle of the Urim and Thummim of the high-priest, which by its frequency did confirm the truth of Moses's relation concerning the several apparitions of God, in order to lead his people, and to give them laws.

The second is the miracle of every seventh year,* during which, though the people of Israel did neither sow nor reap, God, according to his promise, did supply them with plenty of provisions, by making every sixth year extraordinarily plentiful. Now this miracle was a kind of a memorial of that other great miracle whereby God did feed his people with manna for forty years together in the desert, still doubling the proportion of manna every sixth day.

In effect, as that law which commanded a sabbath of rest unto the land every seventh year, was constant-

* Levit. xxv.

ly observed, which would never have been done long if that people had not always been fully convinced, by their own experience, of its divinity; and again, as that miracle was so publicly known, that God by his prophets did often threaten the Jews to deprive them of the fertility of the sixth year, because of their transgressing the sabbath; so it is plain, that no man can reasonably doubt, or dispute the truth of that continual miracle which that law both supposeth and promiseth.

The third is the miracle of a continual protection during the time of those great solemn feasts in which the people were obliged by God's command to attend his service in the tabernacle or at *Jerusalem*. For this law requiring attendance from all the Jews of the age of twenty and upwards, it engaged them to leave the frontiers of their country naked and destitute of men, and so exposed to the inroads of their enemies; but at the same time it gave them occasion to experience the same Divine protection which, as they had read in Moses's writings, their fathers had formerly so often experienced against all their enemies.

It is certain that there was never any commonwealth in the world which had such fundamental law; the danger to which a country is exposed by the observation of it, is too visible not to be avoided. Therefore the Jews, to be sure, would never have acknowledged that law to be Divine, nor yet submitted to it, if they had not been secure of God's protection to prevent all the mischiefs and inconveniences that might arise from their observation of that law: so that, suppose they had been at first so stupid and unwary as to receive it from Moses, yet they would never have observed it so constantly and so long, if they had not had a constant trial of God's protection on all occasions, and if they had not looked upon it as a necessary consequence and accomplishment of those promises which he had made both to them and their fathers.

However, it is certain, that it was the will of God that the Jews should altogether rely upon that miraculous protection of his: nay, the distrusting of it was so offensive to him, that he inflicted an exemplary punishment upon David, for an action which, though innocent of itself in a prince, did yet directly contradict that trust which the Israelites were bound to set upon God's protection; for when David caused the people to be numbered, God sent a pestilence amongst his people, which abated his pride, and thus taught him effectually to rely more upon God for the future, than upon the multitude of his people.

CHAP. V.

That Moses's Description of the Manner of God's giving him his laws, is evidently true.

IT is also equally easy to shew the truth of Moses's description of the manner of the promulgation of God's law in the desert, and of the several parts of it, moral, political, ceremonial.

I shall not stand to consider here the admirable equity, and most absolute perfection of the moral law, and shew that it could have no other author but God alone; neither will I urge, in this place, the extraordinary care God had to regulate the most minute ceremonies, that there might be nothing left undetermined in all the acts of religion; as also the great and Divine wisdom that is discernible in all those ceremonial laws, which, besides their useful opposition to the then Pagan customs, do most of them either mind men of their duty, or represent and typify the things that were to come to pass under the Gospel.

In short, I will not aggravate any farther the consideration of the admirable wisdom that appears

every where in the whole body of the political laws which God gave to the Jews, to settle them into a firm and solid form of government; that wisdom is such, and so visible, that it plainly demonstrates the divinity of them to any man that will but compare the whole body of them, and their absolute perfection, with the defects of all human laws, and the several changes and alterations they have received from time to time.

But I shall lay aside these remarks, and choose to come to those that do not require so much learning, nor so great an intention of thought.

The first of which is, that the moral law was given in the sight and hearing of all the people of Israel, and that the promulgation of it, upon mount *Sinai*, was accompanied with extraordinary marks of glory, and made only after many previous purifications prescribed to the whole congregation in order to receive it.

It is true, indeed, the ceremonial laws which were annexed to it, were not delivered to the people with so much pomp and majesty; but as they were also given in the same desert, and in the presence of the elders of the people assembled together near the tabernacle, after they had earnestly intreated Moses that God would no more speak to them himself it is evident that they are no less authentic than the moral law: therefore we see that they were accordingly received by that people, notwithstanding the troubles, expences, avocations, straights, and hardships, which they might meet with by it.

Now is it in the least probable, that if this people had not been convinced that Moses did really familiarly converse with God for forty days and forty nights upon mount *Sinai*, they would foolishly, without any cause, of a sudden have submitted to such a troublesome yoke of laws, many whereof were opposite both to their opinions and ancient customs?

It is well known, for example, what jealousy there was all along amongst the tribes of Israel, even from the time of their ancestors; yet we do not see that in those laws there is any notice taken of it, or regard had to it, but that on the contrary they seem to foment that spirit of division, when they deprive Reuben of his birth-right, in favour of Joseph's posterity, and of the priesthood in favour of Levi, and of the kingdom in favour of Judah.

Nay, we see, that even after Moses had composed the difference that was once betwixt the tribe of Levi and the followers of Corah, Dathan, and Abiram, they were hardly brought to acquiesce to his decision; and how could he then possibly have raised his own tribe, the tribe of Levi, to such prerogatives, and to such a plentiful condition above all the other tribes, as he did, by assigning the first fruits and offerings to the Levites and priests----how could he, I say, have done that without meeting with some opposition from the rest of the people, except they had all been convinced, by the miracle that God wrought to decide that question, when it was disputed, that he himself was the author of that constitution?

Thus we read, that long after, when king Uzziah boldly presumed to act against Moses's law, Numb. xxv. and to assume to himself the dignity of priesthood, and to do the functions of it, he presently received the punishment due to his presumption; so that, being struck with a sudden leprosy, he was confined to his dying day. Is it any ways probable that a prince, especially of his temper, would have submitted to such a confinement, and meekly resign his crown to his son, if that punishment inflicted upon him had not fully convinced him of the divinity of that law which he had transgressed and violated by his temerity and presumption?

The third reflection is, that the greatest part of those laws being intended by God to inspire his people with an irreconcilable aversion against all those

nations amongst whom they were going to settle, they were so framed, as not only to be opposite to the laws and customs of *Egypt*, from whence they came, but also to those received amongst the Hivites, Ammonites, and other nations, of whose countries they were going to possess themselves.

Thus we find in the xviiith of Leviticus, laws against all incestuous marriages, which, without doubt, were ordinary amongst the Canaanites and Egyptians, who therein followed the examples of the ancient Patriarchs, who married within those forbidden degrees: there we find also the sacrifices to Moloch forbidden, the practice whereof, those nations, in all likelihood, defended by the example of Abraham's sacrifice.

Now, it cannot reasonably be thought that a whole nation would of a sudden receive such laws as deprived them of a liberty and freedom they had always hitherto enjoyed, and condemn of their own accord those sacrifices that had the fairest pretence of religion imaginable, and to use many ceremonies contrary to those received amongst them, if they had not had a strong and extraordinary motive for so doing.

There is another thing, besides, that challenges our consideration, viz. the exact description which God gave to Moses of the tabernacle, of the several parts of the ceremonial worship which was to be performed in that sacred place, and of the manner how this tabernacle, with all its appurtenances, utensils, and ornaments, was finished.

For as this tabernacle was then the centre of the whole Jewish religion, (as the temple was afterwards by succeeding to it) so it was a solemn proof of the divinity of Moses's laws, and of the worship that was performed there.

Is it conceivable, that a whole nation should contribute to the building of it, should see it consecrated, and taken to pieces, and set together again every day, and should read all the particulars relating to its con-

struction, and not discern whether there was any truth and reality in all that was told them concerning the religion which their governor fixed in that place wherein he pretended many revelations were made?

CHAP. VI.

Some other Proofs that confirm Moses's Description of the Manner how the Law was given and promulgated.

BUT if it is so easy to establish the divinity of the Law of Moses, by shewing the truth of the matter of fact, according to the manner of God's promulgation, as Moses relates it, we may further collect the truth of it, by joining these following reflections to those already made in the foregoing chapters.

Certainly if Moses had been the first founder of a kingdom, and had been succeeded in it by his own children and posterity for many generations one after another, we might perhaps have had some grounds to suspect that his successors, consulting their own interest and honour, would have been very glad to persuade their subjects, that the first founder of their kingdom had some communication with God, and that it was from him he received the laws and constitutions which he gave them concerning civil and religious matters.

But it is observable, that Moses was so far from investing his own children with the supreme authority after himself, that he translated it into another tribe, and constituted Joshua, of the tribe of Ephraim, for his successor in the government: as for his posterity, he took little care of it, but reduced it to a rank inferior to that of Aaron's family, which he preferred to the most honourable functions of the priesthood, leaving to his own the meanest and most inconsidera-

ble employments: all which shews evidently that none of those who came after Moses were moved, by any private interest of their own, to defend the truth and authority of his laws and writings, but only by the certain knowledge they had, that they were all divine.

Neither ought we to omit to consider here the manner how Moses decides beforehand such questions, and determines such controversies, as could not be raised but after the conquest of *Canaan*, which was made by his successor only after his death; and how those laws were constantly observed in all the succeeding generations of that people, and submitted unto by the very judges and kings themselves; though there be nothing more common than for a conqueror, such as Joshua was, to admit of no other fundamental laws in that state he is the founder of, than those which he is the author of. Nothing is more usual, than for statesmen to affect the exposing the conduct of their predecessors, especially when the form of government is altered, and from democratical, or aristocratical, is changed into monarchical, as it happened amongst the Israelites. How then could Moses's laws still keep up their authority in all changes and revolutions? How comes it to pass, that in all the successions of judges and kings, there was never any of them attempted to suspend or annul Moses's laws, much less to enact and give any others contrary to them?

Again, how came it to pass, that, in all the divisions and factions that nation fell into, there was never any Jew endeavoured, with any success, to undeceive the rest of his own people, so as to make them shake off the troublesome yoke of Moses's laws? No doubt, only because the generality of that nation never disputed the divine origin and authority of them.

It were an easy thing to demonstrate, by the whole series of the Jewish history, that all those laws which

in Moses's writings are inlaid one within another, and represented as occasioned by several transactions related there, have all been equally received of the Jews, and have all been put together in a body by themselves before Moses's death, as it may be proved out of the xxxist of Deuteronomy.

It appears, that those laws were public, and in great esteem amongst that people to whom God gave them, upon whom he laid an indispensable obligation to read them every day, and to consult them upon every emergent business.

It appears, that they were known equally of all degrees of men, sexes, and ages, which were all obliged to pay obedience to them upon pain of death.

It appears, that those laws were not only publicly kept in the tabernacle, but also privately read in every family.

We see that a whole tribe, viz. the tribe of Levi, was appointed by God to explain them; and in order to that, they were dispersed throughout the whole land of *Canaan*, and exempted from the cares and troubles that necessarily attend husbandry, by the plentiful provision of tithes and offerings that was allotted to them.

We see that God obliged all Jews to read and meditate upon them continually, especially every sabbath-day.

Nay, and we see moreover, that God every seventh year would have them read publicly in a more solemn manner, before the whole congregation of that people, who during that year were obliged to rest from all their ordinary labours and employments, and so had nothing else to do, all that while, but to read the law, to examine it, and to meditate upon it.

Lastly, it appears, that those laws were yet the more solemn and authentic, because they obliged the Jews to celebrate three such feasts as were to be publicly kept by the whole nation, and consequently apt to refresh their memories, and put them in mind,

thrice a year, not only of the surprising miracles that God had done for them, but also of the manner how he gave and promulgated his laws; the miracles giving rise to the laws, and those laws being themselves a means of preserving the memory of those miracles, because of the frequent commemoration of them which was therein enjoined.

Now these things being so, let every one judge, whether the truth of Moses's account of God's giving, and promulgating by his means, that body of laws which he hath inserted in Exodus, and the following books, can possibly, or at least reasonably, be disputed, or doubted of. But I come now to consider the oracles recorded in Moses's writings, in order to demonstrate the truth and divinity of them.

CHAP. VII.

That there is no just Exception can be made against Moses's History, in what relates to the Oracles which he hath recorded in his Books.

THERE are several sorts of Oracles in Exodus, and the other three following Books.

First, there are some whereof the accomplishment did soon follow the prediction.

The deliverance of the Jews out of the Egyptian bondage is of that number; Moses does promise and foretel it; nay, and he executed it himself: and all the people to whom it was promised and foretold, were themselves witnesses of the accomplishment of that prophecy; and it was that accomplishment which established the divinity of his commission.

So is the other prophecy concerning the conquest of the land of *Canaan*, and the several divisions that were to be made of it amongst all the tribes of Israel, Moses foretelling exactly what lot every one should

have, and giving, besides, a description of the country that every tribe was to inhabit.

Those that were born in the desert were witnesses both of the prediction and the execution of it, although it was by the casting of lots that all the tribes got their several partitions.

But, secondly, there are some other oracles in Moses's books, the accomplishment whereof was not to follow the prediction till after a long interval of time.

Such are the prophecies that foretel the future subjection of the Israelites to the Canaanites, and the several deliverances out of that subjection, which God was to effect by the hands of judges, whom he was to raise up for that purpose.

Such again are the prophecies which relate to the future change of their commonwealth into a kingly government.

Thirdly, and lastly, we see that Moses foretells all the accidents, changes, and revolutions, that were to befall the Jews, as long as their state should stand: at least, we see that his predictions are very plain, concerning their several captivities and removals, and their return into the holy land; as also the sieges of *Samaria* and *Jerusalem;* and the irrecoverable dispersion of the whole nation, which we see at present.

But whatever difference there may otherwise be betwixt all these predictions, we may say, that every one of them hath as many pregnant proofs of its certainty and truth, as any thing of that nature is capable of.

For first, as to the first sort of predictions, the accomplishment whereof Moses relates himself,

It plainly appears, that his account cannot in the least be suspected of imposture, because he wrote it amongst a whole nation, which could not possibly be imposed upon in that case, seeing he supposes, and takes it for granted, all along in his relation, that

those predictions were beforehand publicly and generally known of all the people.

As for the accomplishment of the second sort of prophecies, we have the relation of it in such other books as were written after Moses's death, as in the books of Joshua, Judges, and several others, which relate the accomplishment of them, as of prophecies written many years, and even some ages before, by Moses.

Besides, to this we may add, that the account which we find in those books, concerning the accomplishment of Moses's prophecies, is interwoven with such histories as suppose, without any affectation, that his prophecies, as well as his writings, were in the hands of all the world, and distinctly known by every Jew.

And what is further observable, is, that the Jews have always had Moses's books in such an esteem, because of these several illustrious prophecies that are contained in them, that they have always looked upon him as the most excellent of all their prophets. They assert, this very day, that the other prophets had commonly no other knowledge of future events than that which was communicated to them by dreams and visions; whereas Moses had it by an immediate revelation of God himself, who used to speak to him face to face, without any enthusiasm, when he was perfectly awake.

Now, how could ever the Jews have been so strongly prepossessed of that high opinion both of Moses and his predictions, if we suppose that they never saw the accomplishment of any of them?

That would certainly be as strange an illusion as ever was: for it is besides observable, that those prophecies of his were not written by themselves, and kept secret from the generality of the people; but that they were inserted into the several speeches which he made to all the people some time before his death; and which are written, and kept together in the same

volume, to be a standing monument, both of his prophecies, and of his ministry among the Jews.

Now there is a vast difference betwixt a book that is all made up of prophecies, and so kept secret, and seldom read, as the books of the Sybils were, and a book wherein the prophecies it contains are interwoven with a history wherein there is so great a variety of matters, as draws to it and fixes the attention of every reader, and wherein they are mingled with a whole body of political and ceremonial laws, and intermixed with the accounts which Moses gives of all the great transactions which gave the occasion to so many several revelations and prophecies recorded in his books.

I am persuaded that it is impossible for any man to make those reflections upon the opinion which the Jews entertained of Moses's prerogative, and upon the manner that his prophecies, so much reverenced amongst them, were exactly accomplished, and not be convinced of their Divine authority.

CHAP. VIII.

That the Testimony of the Jews is a constant Proof of the Truth of the Oracles related by Moses.

But lest any body should think it strange that I should build the truth of Moses's prophecies upon the testimony of the Jews, I will restrain the authority of it within just and certain bounds.

First, although the Jews bear witness, in their sacred books, that the greatest part of Moses's prophecies are already fulfilled, yet they say some are not; as, for instance, those which relate to the Messiah's coming. But their obstinate blindness is not a just prejudice against such an important truth; to be

convinced of which, we need only to compare Moses's words with the actions of Jesus Christ.

Thus, for what relates to the destruction of *Jerusalem*, we need only compare Moses's prophecy of it, with the description Josephus, their own historian, hath made of the same in his history of the siege and ruin of that city, and of the dissipation of all the nations of the Jews.

But without the Jew's testimony, in what regards the accomplishment of those prophecies whereof the execution was deferred for a very long time, it is easy to convince any the most incredulous man of their truth and divinity, if he please but to make this one reflection, which is, that when Moses relates amongst the oracles of the Patriarch Jacob, a particular prophecy concerning the Messiah's coming, and when he mentions that of Balaam concerning the rising of that Divine star, he subjoins also to the same time that concerning the vocation of the Gentiles to the faith, and brings it in as a certain sign and consequence of the Messiah's being come into the world.

Now, if we examine the meaning of Moses's predictions about the vocation of the Gentiles, which the Prophets that came after him did better explain and illustrate, we shall be apt from thence to conclude, that he in effect foretold that God in the days of the Messiah would follow quite another method than that which he had used before until the time of Moses, viz.

That whereas God might seem to restrain then the privilege of his covenant, to one people alone; which was in effect to restrain the honour of the Messiah's birth to one sole nation of the world, to one sole tribe of that nation, to one sole family of that tribe, to one sole branch of that family, and so to one sole person of that branch; he would (after the Messiah's coming) take a contrary method, and call all men to salvation unto him.

Now that being supposed, the truth of all Moses's prophecies cannot be questioned. And whatever the Jews' opinion be concerning the accomplishment of some of them, it is sufficient for us, that they have carefully and faithfully preserved the books wherein those prophecies which we see so exactly fulfilled, are contained.

For we cannot reasonably suspect Moses, or any other Jew, of forging the prophecies which foretold the calling of the Gentiles: not Moses, seeing all his laws do tend (as I shall shew hereafter more at large) to establish that restriction I was just now speaking of, which was to continue to the Messiah's coming: not the Jews, seeing that none of them can still endure to hear of the removal of that restriction, by the calling of the Gentiles; and that they are all possessed with such a spirit of envy and jealousy against all other nations, that they perfectly hate and abominate them. But besides, we cannot desire a better, nor a more authentic accomplishment of those oracles, which are so opposite to the Jewish principles and prejudices, than that of which we ourselves are witnesses.

The same reflection belongs to the other prophecies of Moses concerning the total dissipation of the Jewish state; as also to the dreadful accomplishment of them in our days. The most resolved obstinacy can suggest but one objection in this matter, which is, that either the Christians or the Jews have falsified Moses's writings, and inserted those prophecies which we now find there, concerning the vocation of the Gentiles, and the dispersion of the Jews, after those things were come to pass.

But first, the books of Moses, which both Christians, and Jews have, are written in Hebrew, and penned in such a style as evidences their antiquity, and as would be inimitable now.

Secondly, that these books, have been all translated into Greek, almost 300 years before Jesus Christ, and about 350 years before the destruction of *Jerusalem*. Neither the Jews, nor yet the Christians, were any longer sole masters of them, when the heathen had them also in their hands.

Besides, those who were converted to Christianity from Judaism and Heathenism, did not only find these prophecies of Moses in the hands of Jews and Heathens, long before the conversion of the Gentiles, and the destruction of *Jerusalem*, but did also make use of them to evince against the Jews, that the Messiah was already come.

Thus, I think, I have sufficiently demonstrated the truth and divinity of all Moses's prophecies which we find in Exodus and the following books.

CHAP. IX.

That it appears, by the Nature of his Reflections, that Moses had the Messias in View when he wrote the Book of Genesis.

I HAVE shewed, in my former reflections upon Genesis, that those who lived before Moses's time, had a distinct knowledge that God would certainly raise up a deliverer amongst them, although they were not certain of the manner of his appearance; and I have besides, I think, sufficiently proved, that the various ideas which the ancients entertained of him upon the first promise made by God of his coming, were the occasion of several criminal actions committed by the Patriarchs, and by those of other nations who had the same pretensions with them.

I am now to prove that Moses himself had the same knowledge, and lived in the same expectation with the ancients that preceded him. It is of more

importance to be shewn, and that henceforth nobody may wonder, if I pretend that the greatest part of the laws he gave to the Jews, both in reference to civil and religious matters, and the greatest part of his prophecies, as also those others mentioned by Prophets that lived after him in that Jewish commonwealth, do all suppose a distinct relation to the promised Messiah.

And to make this evident, I beg leave to offer to the reader's consideration some general reflections upon Moses's history in Genesis.

First, it cannot be denied that Moses was one of the greatest and wisest historians that ever was; there cannot be a greater design, nor a more difficult task than his was, to write the history of 2400 years: he gives an account of the creation of the world in general; and in particular, of that of man, of his sin, of the promise God made him after the fall, of the flood, of the original of all the nations that were in his time.

His way and manner of writing is also very extraordinary: the majesty of his stile is tempered with an admirable plainness; he describes all sorts of passions, to the life; he is admirable in his characters of the men he speaks of, and of God himself. To be convinced of this, let any man read his description of Abraham's sacrifice, and of the several passions Joseph and his brethren were moved and affected with, when he made himself known to them. Besides all that, we may observe two very surprising things in the book of Genesis.

The first is, that Moses recites there such things as seem to be unworthy to be taken notice of, by so grave and wise an historian as he was: he gives, for instance, an exact and particular account of all the circumstances of Abraham's purchase of the cave of *Machpelah*, for a burying-place for his wife; he sets down all the particulars of the incest of Judah with Thamar; and he relates the manner how Leah with

her sons mandrakes obtained leave of Rachel to enjoy her husband for one night, with a surprising exactness.

The other is, that Moses records a whole series of horrible crimes, which seem to be as so many blemishes and odious reflections upon the memory of those whose history he writes.

Now it is not reasonable to suppose that Moses, being so prudent as he is confessed to be, could have been so injudicious as to choose and pick out such passages and actions as are in themselves either trivial and of no moment, or horrible and odious, to fill up with them a book wherein he gives a description of the creation of the world, where he sets down the oracles of God at every turn.

It is natural therefore to judge, that he had some particular prospect in his eyes, which could be no other than that of the promise, which alone justifies his recital of trivial things, and of crimes, in such a serious history as his is.

I shall not repeat here what I have already observed upon the crimes which he relates in Genesis; I add only, that he had the same design and prospect in his narration of such small and inconsiderable transactions.

Thus, by his account of the purchase of the cave of *Machpelah*, his intention was to shew how God intended, by this sepulchre, to affix Abraham, and his posterity after him, to the land of *Canaan:* his scope and prospect was the same when he records the burial of Rachel at *Ephrathah.*

As for the crimes Moses relates, I have before proved, that he designed thereby to shew how all the faithful before his time had their minds altogether taken up with the thoughts and hopes of the accomplishment of the promise: and herein, we may say, the wisdom of Moses is very conspicuous and discernible in the choice he made of those actions, to per-

petuate the memory of the excessive desire which the ancients had to accomplish the promise.

And let no man object here, that it is very strange to see, that during so many ages the promise of the Messiah occasioned no other than wicked actions; for as it appears, by all circumstances, that those crimes related by Moses were committed in different times, and long after one another, so it is plain that he hath recorded those actions on purpose to shew what impression the true knowledge of the promise of the Messiah made upon the mind of those that had it in its perfection and integrity.

If Moses had inserted in this book of Genesis any long discourse as made by Adam about that matter upon a sabbath-day, or if he had given us a relation of what such an one as Seth, or Enoch, or Sem, used to teach concerning that promise in their religious assemblies; it is certain, that, besides the inconvenience of a tedious repetition which he must have made of the same things in every particular account he gives of the several generations that preceded him, he could never have persuaded his readers so well as he may do now.

First, men would have been apt to suspect that those speeches upon the promise of the Messiah were of his own making, and like those set harangues we find in Xenophon or Livy.

Secondly, the crimes that were committed, to get thereby some advantage: as, for instance, the murder of a king by his heir, and successor to the crown, shews in the murderer a much greater ambition, and affectation of the throne, and supposes in him a distinct and clear knowledge of his rights and pretensions to the empire.

CHAP. X.

That the same Persuasion appears throughout the whole Conduct of Moses, until his Death.

BUT it is not only by those and the like reflections which may be made upon the choice Moses hath made of the things which he recites, that we may gather that he had always the promise of the Messiah in view; for he being descended from Abraham, there is no doubt but that, from his youth up, he was brought up in the religion, and consequently in the hopes, of that Patriarch.

But moreover we have reason to think, that the idea of this promise of the Messiah was much more lively and strong in that family, ever since Jacob on his death-bed had foretold and promised to Judah, that it was out of his tribe he was to be born. As for Joseph, to whom that promise might have been applied by the children of Israel, because of his power and glory in *Egypt;* the Egyptian persecution that followed some time after his decease, resolved all scruples and mistakes that might otherwise have been entertained in that matter, and so convinced all those poor sufferers, that their Messiah was as yet to come.

To all these strong presumptions, whereby we may guess what the thoughts of Moses might be concerning the promise of the Messiah, we may add the consideration both of his words and actions, which do very plainly establish the same truth.

St. Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews,* mentions two particular actions of Moses, which, as they challenge our admiration, so they deserve our serious consideration, because they clearly, I think, evidence

* Heb.

that Moses was fully persuaded of the future accomplishment of that promise.

The first is, that he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in *Egypt*, for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. From whence could a resolution so opposite to the ordinary prudence and natural inclinations of other men proceed in him, if it was not, as St. Paul observes it, from a very extraordinary source, viz. from that strong persuasion which he had, that how calamitous soever the then present condition of the people of God might be, yet God had chosen it therein to accomplish that great promise which was the joy of all their ancestors from Adam down to them, the remembrance whereof he renewed, by illustrating those oracles which Jacob pronounced upon his death-bed.

The other is, that Moses always adhered to that miserable people, and stood by them in all their calamities and pressures. It is true, he left them, and retired once into *Midian*, to save his life, and avoid the king's indignation; but he returned to them into *Egypt*, as soon as he had received his commission from God, to deliver them out of their misery and bondage: now he shewed again, by so doing, that he had a certain knowledge of that great promise of God made to that people, and a full assurance and persuasion of its future accomplishment.

Moses informs us indeed, how he refused at first the commission God gave him to deliver his people from the Egyptian slavery, and how he excused himself upon his own incapacity, and being unfit for so great an undertaking: but yet he makes at the same time so visible an allusion to the prophecy concerning the Shiloh (i. e. sent), *O my Lord*, (saith he, to God) *send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom*

thou wist send, that he could hardly express and declare his mind about it more plainly.

But we shall be the better convinced of his allusion to the sending of the Shiloh, if we reflect upon Moses's being of the tribe of Levi, of which God had pronounced nothing concerning the future accomplishment of the promise; he could not be ignorant of his being himself excluded of that privilege; and that, after all, what glory soever the miraculous preservation and illustrious beginnings of his life might seem to pretend and promise to him, yet he could not expect to rise much higher than Joseph had done before him, although he would reassume the former post to which his adoption by Pharaoh's daughter had once raised him.

We see that Moses continued always of the same mind, and entertained still the same notion and hopes of the promise of the Messiah, even after God had revealed to him, that the time of his appearing into the world was not yet come: this, I say, we see by his speech to the people of Israel, related in the eighteenth chapter of Deuteronomy, *The Lord thy God* (saith he to them) *will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me, unto him ye shall hearken:* he does not say a priest, or a king, though the Messiah was to be both; but he saith, a Prophet, to teach them not to mistake any of their priests or kings for the Messiah, but to expect and regard less, in his person, the external honour of Aaron's family, and the worldly grandeur of kings, than the privilege of Divine inspiration, which was absolutely necessary to him as the founder of the true religion.

CHAP. XI.

That Balaam's Prophecy, which Moses relates, is a further Argument of the same Persuasion in him.

As we ought to shew that Moses had a very clear and distinct knowledge of this promise, so, I think, it will not be amiss to make here a particular reflection upon what he relates Numb. xxiii.

The Moabites being descended from Lot's eldest daughter, it is very natural to conceive, that Balaac their king was so desirous to have the Israelites cursed from God, and by one of his prophets only, because he designed thereby to secure himself of the divine blessing; or, which is the same thing, of the privilege of the accomplishment of the promise, to which he thought he had a just claim and pretension by his being one of Lot's posterity.

And this observation upon Balaac's pretensions and action, is the more just and well grounded, because the notion of the cause which he intended to have had pronounced against the Israelites is directly opposite to the terms of the promise which God made to Abraham, *In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;* which words, as I observed before, do import a direct opposition to Lot's pretension.

Now all this being supposed, one needs only consider the terms of the prophecy spoken by Balaam in favour of Jacob, to see that Moses hath related it, only to shew,

First, that although those neighbouring nations to *Judea* had degenerated, and corrupted themselves much by their communication with Ham's posterity, yet they preserved a strong, though confused notion of their ancestor's pretensions, and acted according

to that prejudice of theirs in all matters and occurrences of great moment.

Secondly, that it might be an authentic determination of all the several contests and pretensions which had divided the posterity of Terah until that time.

It is like a definitive sentence; first, in favour of Abraham, against the Moabites and Ammonites, who were descended from Lot; secondly, in favour of Isaac, against the pretension of the Ishmaelites, descended from Ishmael; thirdly, in favour of Jacob, against the pretension of the Edomites, descended from Esau.

For when he foretels that there shall come a star out of Jacob, he decides the three forementioned controversies; Jacob having been preferred to Esau, Isaac to Ishmael, and Abraham to Lot. Now Jacob could not be preferred to the Moabites, but he must be so too to the Ammonites, Ishmaelites, and Edomites.

This prophecy, as any one may see, is absolutely necessary, because it resolves all the questions and controversies which did excite so many jealousies amongst all those neighbouring nations.

This oracle of Balaam is yet the more remarkable, because, that notwithstanding it was pronounced at the entry into *Canaan*, the possessing and inhabiting of which country was one of the chiefest characters of the Israelites' distinction from all other nations, yet in it Balaam makes a very distinct mention of the future calling of the Gentiles to the faith; he calls them the children of Seth, to intimate that in the time of the Messiah, the restriction made and observed by God before that time, was then to cease, and that there should be no more distinction betwixt the Jews and Gentiles, who were all the children of Noah, and all equally descended from Seth by him, because then all nations were to be called to the communion of the Messiah.

I know that some, by the children of Seth, understood the inhabitants of a certain town in the country of Moab, mentioned in the xvth of Isaiah, according to the Septuagint.

But the Arabian interpreter of the Samaritans* brings very good arguments to prove, that that place of Scripture is to be understood of the Messiah, and shews that he is called the head of the children of Seth, because Seth was the head and common father of all men since the flood, and at the same time of all the faithful before the flood; and that those words of Genesis iv. 26. *Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord*, relate to Seth, and not to Enos, as it is commonly believed.

Besides, this prophecy by these words, *I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh*, determines that the birth of the Messiah was not near, but was reserved for a further time.

Lastly, it is a very singular thing, that this oracle should be represented to us as coming out of the mouth of a Prophet who was chosen by God out of the family of Abraham; because the author of it decides these important questions and differences, without any visible partiality, and without being biassed by the pretensions of his birth.

Now there are three things in it which clearly prove that it could not be unknown to Moses.

The first is, that immediately after this prophecy, which was as public and well known amongst the Moabites as any prophecy could be; after the tedious preparation, and the many difficulties which Balaam made to come to Balaac; after the many ceremonies and mysteries which he used upon that occasion; and notwithstanding the great and panic terror of the Moabites, at the approach of the Israelites; nay, and notwithstanding the express threats and ominous prophecies of Balaam against that people; notwith-

* Abusaid. MS. in the French King's library, note 4. upon Gen. iv. 26.

standing all this, I say, we see the daughters of Moab imitating the carnal prudence of Lot's daughters, and courting the alliance of the Israelites, as if they had had a mind to make themselves amends in that way for the loss and wrong they had suffered by the sentence which Balaam pronounced in favour of Israel.

We see, I say, that Moses, immediately after he had related the prophecies of Balaam, tells us, that the daughters of Moab invited the people of Israel to the sacrifices of their gods, and that the people of Israel accepted of the invitation, and accordingly feasted, and began then to defile themselves with the daughters of Moab.

Now, that such a thing should happen presently after Balaam had uttered his prophecy, shews evidently that there was some relation betwixt those two transactions. And this may be further made out, from the manner and nature of the punishment which God inflicted upon the Israelites for their criminal commerce with the Moabites; although the pretence of it might be grounded upon the design which the daughters of Moab had formed, according to the principles of their education, to share in the accomplishment of the promise, by their conceiving and getting children by those whom Balaam's prophecy had invested with the right and privilege of accomplishing that promise.

The second is, that accordingly, about two hundred years after Moses, we see that Ruth the Moabitess left her own country, to settle and live at Bethlehem, and affected besides to marry there again one of the tribe of Judah; no doubt because she had got in her own country a certain knowledge of that famous oracle, which afterwards made her easily yield to the counsels, and receive instructions both of her mother-in-law and of her own husband, who was of the tribe of Judah, and, no doubt, had the books of Moses, wherein were inserted both the prophecy of Jacob in

favour of Judah, and that of Balaam in favour of the Israelites against the Moabites.

The third is, that the Jews have now for several ages constantly maintained, that Shimei's curses against David,* which afterwards he called *maledictionem pessimam*, נמר זת contained an upbraiding reflection as well upon the meanness of his birth, as being descended from a Moabitess, as upon his adultery, &c. This is related by St. Jerome, or some other ancient author, who writ that discourse, *de traditionibus Hebræorum*, upon the second chapter of the third book of Kings. This Jewish interpretation would be very probable, if that was but true what Rabbi Salomon saith upon the second chapter of the first book of Kings, v. 19. that when we read there that Solomon caused a seat to be set for the king's mother, we ought to understand it of Ruth the Moabitess, and not of Bathsheba. We know the Jews ascribe a much longer life to Zarah, the daughter of Asher, one of Jacob's sons; for they are still of the same opinion as they were in St. Hierome's time, that she was yet alive in David's time.

Nobody can condemn this reflection upon Ruth, if he will but consider, that her faith having been so rewarded, that the Messiah came out of her posterity, she is particularly made mention of in his genealogy; and that on the other hand her history hath been preserved amongst the other books of the Old Testament, as a kind of prescription, not only against the Moabites' pretensions, long before condemned by Balaam's prophecy, but also against those of the Ishmaelites and Edomites, who had no better claim to the promise than the Moabites, having no other than that of a general call, and of their birth-right before Jacob's posterity.

* 1 Kings, ii. 8.

CHAP. XII.

That one may see also, in Moses's Law, plain Footsteps of God's Design, in distinguishing these from whom he would have the Messiah to be born.

IT was altogether necessary for the execution of my design, to establish well the authority of Moses's books, upon which I intend to make some reflections: it was likewise necessary to shew, as I think I have done sufficiently, that Moses was perfectly acquainted with God's promise concerning the Messiah. Therefore, I believe, I may now come to shew, that both Moses, and those that came after him, had all an eye upon the Messiah in their chiefest regulations.

But to give a greater insight and understanding into the things that I am to say, I think it may not be amiss to remind the reader, and to lay before him once more, the several characters of God's conduct in that matter, that he may be the better able to judge of the whole series of his design.

I have heretofore shewed, that Moses's intention was to establish two things in the book of Genesis.

The one, that all men have derived their original from Adam, whom God created.

The other, that man having sinned, God promised to reinstate him by one of his own posterity.

The first of these was then solidly proved by a plain matter of fact, when I shewed that such a tradition as Moses relates about the creation of the world, cannot reasonably be doubted of.

As for what concerns the other, viz. the promise of the Messiah, which was the chiefest object of man's hope and comfort, I have also shewed, I think, that the notion and expectation of it was very strong and

lively, and the original cause of all the extraordinary actions recorded by Moses.

But as this promise was not to be fulfilled for many ages, so God made it only in very general terms, and had still reserved to himself the revelation for after ages, as he thought fit, both as to the manner and time of its accomplishment. It is therefore absolutely necessary that we should consider also how God preserved all along the distinct knowledge of it amongst men.

Now, in reading my reflections upon Genesis, one must needs have observed that God, even in those early times of the world, did restrain the privilege of accomplishing that promise by little and little to some particular men; till at last he openly declared, that he had settled it in the tribe of Judah, as we read in Gen. xlix.

Thus we see, that God in the very beginning of the world restrained that prerogative to Seth's family, and excluded Cain's from it; then afterwards, of all Seth's family, he restrained it to Noah alone and his family; then, of Noah's family, to Shem alone; then, afterwards, of all Shem's posterity, to Abraham alone; then, of Abraham's sons, to Isaac alone; and of Isaac's, to Jacob alone, whose son Judah was alone invested with that privilege, and all his brethren excluded.

It is moreover observable, that in those seven forementioned restrictions which God made, he seems to have affected to prefer the youngest to the eldest; as it is evident in his choice, if not of Noah, and Shem, who was elder than the other sons, yet certainly in that of Seth, who was younger than Cain; of Abraham, who was the youngest of Terah's sons; of Isaac, who was younger than Ishmael; of Jacob, who was younger than Esau; and of Judah, who was one of the youngest of Leah's sons.

So likewise, if the reader would judge of God's design by the event alone, he might justly conclude that God, by this affected choice, intended to raise continual jealousies betwixt the eldest) who pretended that the privilege of accomplishing the promise did belong to them because of their birthright) against their youngest brothers, whom they saw preferred by God's immediate choice.

One may also further add, that God seems to have strengthened these jealousies, by introducing sometimes a sort of conformity amongst the pretenders to the execution of this promise: thus, for instance, as Abraham had two children, so Lot had two; as Jacob had twelve sons, so Esau had also twelve: and sometimes one may find, that those particular persons who are preferred, are charged with very severe accusations.

Now, after all these general reflections, it is natural for us to consider, what care God hath upon all occasions particularly taken to distinguish and protect those whom he had invested with the right of accomplishing the promise, that their state and succession might never be uncertain.

It was this design, no doubt, which obliged God to make Seth the depositary of his service and worship, that he might thereby save Noah from the flood, and so procure to Shem his father's blessing.

It was for this reason that he called Abraham out of his own country, and made him travel from place to place, to make him thereby famous in the world, and to invite men by that means to inquire after his profession, his hopes, and his religion.

Again, it was for this that he obliged this Patriarch to the practice of circumcision, which was a real distinction, and an indelible character; and that he likewise confined him to a certain place, by fixing him in some sort to the cave of *Machpela*, which he had purchased of the children of Hamor.

Lastly, it was for that reason that God would have the posterity of Jacob distinguished from all other nations of the world, and that he prohibited all alliance with them, as also all imitations of the customs and religious ceremonies practised amongst them.

Now all this being supposed, I say, that whether we consider the end and principal design of Moses's laws, or whether we examine his several prophecies, which do particularly characterise the Messiah, we shall find that God did all along continue in his first design of distinction, and consequently of keeping up the jealousies of those that had any pretensions to the privilege of accomplishing the promise; or, which is all one, that he hath prosecuted the same design to Jesus Christ's time, in whom Christians do maintain that the first promise was accomplished, God having then, and not till then, both put an end to all those differences and distinctions, which were only intended to make the Messiah the better known, and the more certainly discerned at his coming, and then to cease; just as scaffolds are taken away as soon as the building is finished; and having also on the other hand rectified the principles from which flowed that spirit of jealousy, amongst those who had the same pretension.

We see, that accordingly God excluded all other nations from the right of accomplishing this promise.

We see, that even in the family of Judah, who was himself the youngest of the first set of Leah's children, he restrained the execution of it to the youngest brothers.

We see, that he raised occasions of jealousies, even amongst the tribes of Israel.

In a word, we see, that of all those means which can distinguish any one people from all other nations of the world, or one tribe from twelve, one family from all other families of the same tribe, and one particular person from all the rest of his family, none

were omitted, but (on the contrary) all made use of by God, to follow this his first design.

This I intend firmly to establish, by examining the thing gradually from Moses's time, (by whose ministry God enacted and published those laws by the means whereof he intended the Messiah might certainly be known) to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom we believe that the promise was accomplished.

CHAP. XIII.

That the Manner of God's promulgating his Law amongst the Israelites, did much conduce to the distinguishing them from all other Nations.

I DO not barely design here at first to observe the several resemblances which are observable betwixt the things related by Moses in Genesis, and those which one find in the following books.

Neither will I merely establish here that, as Jacob's going down into *Egypt* with all his children, and the protection that they all received there, from Joseph, did serve to fulfil the prediction which God made of that event by Joseph's dreams, so we may say in general, that the sending of Moses, his miracles, and his whole ministry to the time of his death, when he intrusted Joshua with the conduct of the Jews, were a literal accomplishment of the first part of the promise which God had formerly made to Abraham, to deliver the fourth generation of his posterity out of the captivity which it was to fall into, and then to bring it into the land of *Canaan* to possess it.

Moses indeed represents that people, according to the tenor of the prophecy, as groaning under the hard pressure of a cruel captivity in *Egypt*, when Joseph and his eminent services were both forgotten.

Afterwards, he tells us how they were miraculously delivered out of that captivity.

And then, lastly, he informs us, that after he had carried them through many difficulties in the wilderness, he brought them at last to the very borders of *Canaan*, and so left them ready to conquer and possess it, according to God's promises, and their pretensions grounded upon those promises which had been so often repeated to them ever since Abraham's time.

Joshua, Moses's successor, and in all likelihood the author of the description of his death, is he that accomplished the other part of God's promise to Abraham, by introducing the Israelites into *Canaan*, and actually possessing them of it: so there is nothing can be imagined more precise in this whole matter.

But it is not all this only that renders both the person and ministry of Moses so glorious: there are several other things in Exodus, and his other following books, which do much better deserve our consideration.

Those books contain, as I have already observed, an exact history of all that God did, in order to give a certain form to the commonwealth of Israel, a fixed place, and a particular service; that is, in order to follow his great design of having the Messiah known without mistake, whenever he should be born amongst the Jews; and this is my chiefest aim in the reflections upon Exodus and the other books of Moses.

First, we might say in general, that the observance of the sabbath, and the use of circumcision, did distinguish the Jews; but yet, I have shewed, that the sabbath was a law common to all nations in the world, and that circumcision on the other hand was common both to the Ishmaelites and Edomites: and this will oblige us to make some particular observations upon that matter; and we must consider

how God took care to distinguish that people, by giving them his law.

It is in general evident, that the care which God took to give the moral law to that whole people, did eminently distinguish them from all other nations, whom he permitted to walk in their own ways, as St. Paul expresses it: to be sure, it shews them that he resolved to fix them to himself, and to hinder them from following both the idolatries of other nations, and those inundations of vice which ruin all societies.

And, without doubt, the surprising pomp which accompanied the promulgation of God's law, and which was recorded by his order, before those that had been the eye-witnesses of it, did much contribute to persuade them that God had a particular regard and kindness for their nation, and that he honoured them with his particular guidance.

We may make the same observation upon God's giving them a political law, and upon the care that he was also pleased to take of regulating their civil government, and preventing the difficulties which are commonly occasioned by such accidents as cannot be foreseen by any human legislators, which cause great revolutions and changes in all governments; all which shew sufficiently, that his design was to raise them up to, and to maintain them in as great prosperity and welfare, as possibly could be procured to a nation by perfect laws, and a well constituted government: even the many ceremonies which God gave them, are a further demonstration of God's design to distinguish them from other nations.

It seems not to have been God's intention at first to lay upon them such numbers of ceremonies; for it was only after the commission of the sin of the golden calf, that God laid upon them that heavy and troublesome yoke, on purpose to employ all their time, and so keep them from falling into idolatry

again. But, however, Tanchuma,* a famous Jewish author, observes, that there was nothing left in the world, but what God took care to give the Israelites some laws about: as, for instance, if any Jew went out to plough, he was forbidden to do it with an ox and an ass; if to sow, he was forbidden to sow his field with several kinds of seed; if to reap, he was forbidden to reap the whole crop: if any one went about to bake bread, he was commanded to take out of his dough, so much as to make a cake thereof to consecrate it; if any one did sacrifice any animal, he was charged to give away to the priest, the right shoulder of it, with both the cheeks and inwards; when any one found out a nest of birds, he was obliged to let the old one fly away; if any one went a hunting, he was to shed the blood of his game, and then to cover it with dust; when any one had planted any fruit-trees, he was to count the first thereof as uncircumcised for the three first years; when any one found a sepulchre, even there certain cautions were prescribed; if any one shaved himself, he was forbidden to *mar the corners of his beard;* when any one built a house, he was to take care there should be rails, and *mezouzoth* made, to prevent all danger; they were obliged to put particular threads in their garments: and there are many other things which were apparently commanded to distinguish the Jews, by obliging them to the practice of these, and such other laws as took up all their time. But if we may say, in general, that the whole scope of the ceremonial law was to employ the Jews, we may yet more justly say, that it was in particular intended by God to inspire into his people a horror against all idolatrous practices, and an aversion against all commerce with idolaters; and this may be further discerned, if we examine those laws in particular.

* Jalkut. in Pent. fol. 228. col. 3.

One sees this perfectly by the manner of God's pronouncing some meats unclean, and his forbidding to eat the flesh of some animals; for we may find that the greatest part of these animals were worshipped amongst the heathens. Thus the more learned amongst the Jews prove that the goat and the ram were of that number; but so, no doubt, were all the animals which were usually offered in sacrifice to God, as particularly the bull. Now there is nothing which alienates two nations from one another more, than when one of them eats or sacrifices that which the other makes the object of his religion.

One of the most learned authors that ever the Jews had, hath diligently observed, that God gave many ceremonial laws directly contrary to those rites which the Zabij used in their superstitions; and a learned English Doctor* hath lately proved it very largely, as to the ceremonies which God commanded to be used in the sacrifice of the paschal lamb, and in the manner of their building of the altar, and of their going up to it; in the prohibition of seething a kid in his mother's milk, and of offering honey in their sacrifices; in the prohibition of their forcing their children to pass through the fire to Moloch; in the law which prohibited their eating blood, and rounding the corners of their heads, and making any marks in their flesh; and in I do not know how many laws of that nature, the design of whose institution is not so evident now, since the rites of all those ancient idolaters are utterly abolished, and but imperfectly recorded in some ancient authors.

Thus we see, that we need only make a very little reflection upon God's conduct, in giving all his laws to the Israelites, thereby to judge, that the main scope of those laws was to put a bar betwixt the people of Israel and all other idolatrous nations, which should be a visible and a constant distinction, till

* Spencer. de Leg. Mos. lib. 2.

the Messiah should be born, who was to make all those marks of discrimination to cease entirely.

CHAP. XIV.

That God seems to have designed to keep up a Spirit of Jealousy in the very Bosom of the Jewish Nation.

WE have seen, in general, that God, by giving his law to the Israelites, intended to discriminate them from all other nations of the world, and in particular from those nations which had shewed themselves to be jealous of that distinction; I mean from the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Ishmaelites, and the Edomites, as I shall hereafter shew.

I have likewise observed that God, by his conduct, and his oracles, did also excite a spirit of jealousy amongst the several pretenders to the promise. I come now to shew that God hath followed the same design in his law, and that he hath made use of that jealousy as of another means to make that people, which he had separated from all other nations, keep up always amongst themselves a lively notion and expectation of the Messiah.

Perhaps the reader may think that these reflections may interrupt the series of the observations I have undertaken to make upon Moses's law: but besides that I shall resume them presently, so one may easily discern, that these two remarks concerning the spirit of distinction, and the spirit of jealousy, kept up in the bosom of this people, ought to be well considered by those that desire to know the genius of God's laws, and the original causes of all the transactions related by Moses, and by the other sacred authors, who acted in pursuance of that design which appears in those laws which Moses gave to the people of Israel.

I begin with two general reflections which I think are very useful in the explication of God's conduct upon this occasion.

Two things, as I have already observed, have conduced to keep up that jealousy whereof Moses has given so many instances in the book of Genesis.

The first is, the preference which God hath commonly given to the younger brothers before the elder.

The second is, the choice which God hath made of such particular persons as appeared absolutely unworthy of God's choice.

So that here one sees a continual series in the Jewish history written by Moses, and by the Prophets, who made the same observations upon that model which Moses had given them.

First of all, the tribe of Judah is preferred before all the other tribes of Israel, and particularly before the tribe of Reuben, which afterwards occasioned the insurrection of some Reubenites in their sedition against Moses, wherein Corah, Dathan, and Abiram perished; just as God's preferring Abel offended Cain, and as Joseph's brethren conspired together to put him to death, because of his dreams, which foretold his greatness and their fall.

Secondly, one sees that Phares, Judah's youngest son, is preferred not only before all the other children of Judah, but even before Zerah, the eldest of the twins which Judah had by Thamar; just as Jacob was preferred before his brother Esau, though they were twins, and Esau born the first of the two.

One sees afterwards, that God having chosen Jesse of all the posterity of Phares, David, the youngest of all his sons, was preferred before his brethren, when God was pleased to translate the kingdom to the tribe of Judah, and to the family of Jesse; just as we saw before, in the election of the first king whom the Israelites desired to be set over them, that he was chosen by lot, by an extraordinary

effect of providence, out of the tribe of Benjamin, though the youngest of all Jacob's children.

Thus one sees that Solomon, the youngest of David's children, was preferred before his brothers, and that the same Solomon built the temple of God in the tribe of Benjamin, though he himself was of the tribe of Judah.

We shall afterwards see that the Messiah was descended from David, by Nathan, son to one of David's younger children, and by Resah, Zorababel's youngest son, from whom the Blessed Virgin drew her original.

The second remark is about the care God hath taken, by his choice of some particular persons to accomplish the promise, to furnish those with pretences and objections, who might be interested to oppose the restrictions which God had made in favour of their equals; for as they served to keep up a jealousy amongst all the pretenders to the promise, so they also served to preserve a distinct knowledge of it, and to make them inquire more diligently after it.

In short, as we see that the Ishmaelites might upbraid Sarah both with her frequent rapes, and with her cruelty to Hagar and Ishmael; as the Edomites might upbraid Jacob's posterity with Rebecca's supplanting their father Esau, and cheating him of his blessing; so likewise we may observe that God not only chose Thamar to have the Messiah descend from her, but also would have her incest with her father-in-law recorded. What! might all the other tribes of Israel say, were there then no honest women in Israel, that the Messiah's ancestors must descend from those that were born of an incestuous commerce? What probability is there that God should choose the tribe of Judah? Had not all the other children of Judah a fairer pretension to this privilege, than Phares could have? And might not their posterity revive against the posterity of Phares

that severe law against bastard children which we read of Deut. xxiii.

God chose in the like manner Ruth the Moabitess, and had her history written, and his choice recorded, as if he had intended to prepare an excuse for those of the Israelites who afterwards would refuse to submit to David. What probability is there, might they say, that God would have the Messiah to be born of a Moabitess, seeing it was by his order that Moses caused all those Israelites to be put to death, who after the pronunciation of Balaam's prophecy held any commerce with the daughters of *Moab?* Was there any likelihood that such a thing could be possible, especially seeing there was a law which God would have to be inserted in Deuteronomy, which excludeth the Moabites from the possibility of ever being admitted into the people of God. But at least, was not this choice of Ruth the Moabitess, a fair cause of jealousy to all the other families of Judah?

God caused the adultery of Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon, to be carefully recorded, as it were on purpose to excuse the rebellion of those who afterwards sided with Jeroboam, against Rehoboam and his authority.

Is it probable (might these rebels say) that God would have chosen that bloody cruel man David, that adulterer, that he and Bathsheba should beget the Messiah together?

Had Jesse no other children besides David? And if David must needs have been the man, why should Solomon, born of Bathsheba, be preferred before all his brothers?

There are three things considerable in this matter.

The first is, that God having given to Joshua the conduct of the Israelites, after he had formerly raised Joseph so much above his brethren by his advancement in *Egypt*, and given to his tribe two portions of the land of *Canaan*, he permitted that Jeroboam should rise up against Rehoboam, Solomon's son;

and not only so, but should likewise, according to the prophecy related Gen. xxviii. 17. build a temple at Bethel, as being jealous against Solomon, who built one upon mount Moriah, according to the prophecy we find in Gen. xxii. 14.

The second is, that this separation gave a fair pretence to raise the reputation of the prophecies which Jacob uttered upon his death-bed in favour of Joseph; which prophecies ran in terms so very high, that they not only gave colour to Jeroboam's pretensions to the kingdom, but did also lead the ten tribes into an expectation that the Messiah should be born, not in the tribe of Judah, as Jacob had expressly foretold, Gen. xlix. but in the tribe of Ephraim, according to the constant custom of God's preferring the younger sons of a family before the elder, in the matter of this promise.

The third is, that even the greatest part of the two loyal tribes received at last the interpretation which the other ten made of that prophecy. At least, it appears, that many of the Jews have endeavoured to prove that the Messiah should come from the tribe of Ephraim, by interpreting several prophecies that way, which, according to their account and their prejudices, were expressed in such terms as could not be understood of him that was to be born in the tribe of Judah, and out of the royal family of David.

CHAP. XV.

That Circumcision was a Means of distinguishing the Israelites from other Nations.

BUT I must now resume my observations upon Moses's laws. Circumcision was, without question, one of the first and most sensible means whereby God

did distinguish Jacob's posterity from all other people. I will therefore begin with it.

First, the very signification of the word circumcision, implies a real and corporeal distinction: even Tacitus understood it so, when he saith, *Circumcidere genitalia instituêre Judæi ut diversitate noscantur.** But besides, by it God's covenant was, as it were, printed and engraved in the very flesh of all Abraham's posterity.

God has explained it thus himself in several places; and one may affirm, that this was very agreeable to God's design, which was, as we have intimated before, to hinder that people, from which the Messiah was to be born, from mingling with the other nations of the world, which would have made the pedigree of the Messiah suspected, or at least much more difficult to be traced.

I will not relate here, the several notions of Divines about the use of that ceremony, but only content myself to make two very natural reflections upon it.

The first of which is, that it was particularly in respect of the Messiah, that God would have that mark made upon that part of man's body which is inservient to generation. As the Messiah was to come into the world by generation, according to the words of the first prophecy concerning him, and also according to the further revelations of God to Abraham about that promise, so God could do nothing more agreeable to the idea the Israelites had of the Messiah, and of his birth, than to distinguish them, by a relation to that blessed seed which he promised them: as God designed, without all question, by that means to oblige the Jews to remember the first promise made to mankind; so, no doubt, he intended by it to fix their minds upon the consideration of that favour he had shewed to them as well as to

* Hist. l. i.

Abraham, to distinguish them from all the people of the earth, that the deliverer of the world might be born in their commonwealth, and from one of their posterity.

The second reflection is, that it was the same prospect to the Messiah, which made God condemn those to death, who should either remain uncircumcised themselves, or leave their children so.

Is it not a very surprising thing, that so much rigour and severity should be used in exacting the observation of a ceremony which was merely indifferent in its nature, and had no moral goodness in itself? But hereby it appears the more evidently, that God designed that the use of circumcision, by which he distinguished Abraham's posterity from all other nations of the world, should be a kind of immoveable bar, to hinder the Jews from mingling with all strangers.

Indeed there are three things which may be objected against these reflections.

The first is, that it does not appear that this ceremony was counted such a proper sign of distinction, seeing the use of it hath been sometimes intermitted; as, for instance, when the whole nation of the Jews left it off for forty years in the wilderness.

The second is, that if the chiefest end of circumcision was to distinguish that people, with design to make the Messiah known, there was no need that that yoke should be laid upon all the Jews, but only upon the family from which he was to descend, or at the most upon the tribe wherein that family was comprised.

The third is, that circumcision was common both to Esau's and Jacob's posterity; and even used amongst the Egyptians, and the inhabitants of *Colchis*, as we may learn from Herodotus, and some other heathen authors.

But after all, it is an easy thing to satisfy a man's mind in all these appearing difficulties. I confess

that one is surprised to see that God should not oblige the Jews to be circumcised in the wilderness; for which several reasons are given,

First, that God, being displeased with that generation, would not allow that they should be honoured with this token of his covenant: others say, that their journeying in the wilderness gave them a dispensation from the observance of that ceremony. But we may give a better, I think, and more natural account of that matter, if we do but follow the idea which occasioned my second reflection.

The going forth of some Egyptians with the Israelites out of *Egypt*, was a type of the calling of the Gentiles, as I will shew somewhere else: it was then necessary, that as all ceremonies, and circumcision in particular, were then to be abolished, to take away all distinction from among Seth's posterity, so the use of circumcision should at that time be suspended.

However, God would not have the suspension of that ceremony to continue till they were entered into the land of *Canaan*.

First, to prevent the intruding of some Canaanites into the body of the Hebrews.

Secondly, to the end that these Israelites who were to enter into *Canaan*, being as well uncircumcised as the Egyptians' children, and being all made afterwards equal by circumcision, should have no occasion to upbraid them with their *different original*.

The second objection may as easily be answered: one might think at first, that indeed the Messiah had been more easily known at his coming, if the use of circumcision had been enjoined only to the family, or at most to the tribe, from which he was to descend: but besides that it had exposed that family, or that tribe, to great persecutions, it had certainly much diminished that spirit of jealousy which was kept up by the conformity of the several pretenders, which on

the other hand was of mighty use to preserve a distinct idea of the Messiah, and a desire of his coming.

As for the third objection, there is no difficulty in it: it is true, some Jewish interpreters imagine, that Joseph took occasion to prescribe the use of circumcision to the Egyptians, after Pharaoh had commanded his people to do whatsoever Joseph should bid them to do: but that conjecture is groundless; for it appears that the Egyptians who went out of *Egypt* with Moses, were not circumcised. It is true, that nation did, some ages after Moses, take up the ceremony of circumcision; and it is very likely that it was some Egyptian colony which introduced the use of it into *Colchis:* but the observance of that sole ceremony amongst those nations could cause no confusion, because none of them pretended to derive their original from Abraham, but had, as historians observe, quite different reasons from those which the Jews had for their practice of circumcision.

As for the Ishmaelites and Edomites, the greatest part of the Jews are of opinion, that God did discriminate their circumcision from the circumcision which was practised by those nations, by his institution of what they call the *perigna* after the circumcision; which they endeavour to prove by a passage in Joshua, wherein it is said, that God ordered Joshua to circumcise again the children of Israel the second time. But others of them laugh at that criticism, because it appears that those words do relate to the second solemn circumcision which that people did observe after their deliverance out of *Egypt:* therefore, without running to this answer, one needs only follow the idea we have already made use of, which is drawn from God's design of keeping up a spirit of jealousy, by some conformity betwixt the circumcision practised by the Jews, and the ceremonies used amongst those rival nations.

Why then were some of the neighbouring nations of *Canaan* descended from Abraham, circumcised? As, for example, the Ishmaelites in *Arabia*, who were circumcised at thirteen years of age; the posterity of Abraham by Keturah, viz. the Midianites, who were in the country of *Moab*, and the Edomites, descended from Esau, who did all practise circumcision.

Certainly, it is evident, that as God set the Israelites in the midst of all those nations, who by virtue of their ancestors' birth-right, or some other pretensions, put in their claim with the Jews to the execution of the promise, on purpose to excite the attention of this people who were surrounded with these rivals, so he did for the same reason permit that the Ishmaelites, the Midianites, and Edomites, should practise the ceremony of circumcision, almost in the same manner that the Israelites did.

But that we may the better apprehend the force of this reflection, we need only consider the jealousy which is caused amongst the several sects of Christians, by the conformity of sacraments; which is so far from uniting them with one another, as it might justly be expected, that on the contrary, one may say, that this conformity in some things alienates them from one another, and breeds reciprocal jealousies amongst their several parties, especially when they come to reflect upon the other controverted articles that cause the separation.

Moreover, it is reasonable to consider that God had provided a sufficient distinction betwixt that people and other nations, by giving them many other laws, which had no other visible use than that of discrimination: as, for instance, the three great feasts which the Jews were obliged to keep.

The feast of the passover was the memorial of the accomplishment of God's promise to Abraham to deliver his posterity out of the country wherein they were to be in bondage after 430 years; and conse-

quently could not be observed by the Ishmaelites, nor by the Edomites, who had never been captives in, nor delivered out of *Egypt*, in the fourth generation.

The Pentecost was a public monument of the promulgation of the law, and all its parts, among the children of Israel, and consequently peculiar to that nation.

Thus the feast of Tabernacles preserved the memory of that solemn action of the Israelites' continuance for forty years in the desert.

It were needless, after such remarkable distinctions, to observe here, (which yet was certainly designed for that end) that God took care to distinguish that people by some injunctions, which they were to observe, in the fashion of their clothes, of their beard, of their philacteries, of their mezouzoth, of their thaleth, of their zizith, and many the like things, the observance of all which served to hinder any confusion of the people of Israel with their neighbours.

CHAP. XVI.

That the Law of Moses engaged the Jews to the Study of their Genealogies, that they might certainly know that of the Messiah.

BUT if God took care to distinguish his people from all other nations by such an indelible mark, in the practice whereof there was no fear of any trick; seeing no man would circumcise himself without thinking upon it more than once, as the history of the Sichemites assures us; so one sees, that he took as great a care to divide them into tribes, and the tribes into families, that they might subsist and continue in a kind of a separation from one another, although they

were at first but one single family, and one single nation.

Now to what purpose, I pray, were all those distinctions, if they had not been designed to manifest the Messiah at his coming?

We see then, that they could have no other use; for, as God had decreed that the Messiah should be born out of the tribe of Judah, so it was necessary that the several genealogies of that tribe should be very publicly known.

And therefore one sees that God secured this, not only with all necessary care, but even with a caution greater than could have been reasonably desired.

He engages all the tribes of Israel to preserve with a kind of affectation, their several genealogical tables; he neglects none of the means that might be useful to distinguish the tribe of Judah from other tribes, and the family from which the Messiah was to be descended from all the other families of the same tribe.

Indeed I am not ignorant that anciently one might see some other nations using the distinctions of tribes amongst themselves, much after the same manner as the Jews did, and that they were careful to preserve their genealogies in order to derive their original from the same common father; thus we ought to understand what we read in history of the tribes amongst the Athenians. Thus Hippocrates runs up his own pedigree to the twentieth man of his ancestors, and Herodotus mentions several instances of the same care.

But one sees that this affectation was infinitely greater among the Jews.

For we see, that they did not only rank themselves every one under the standard of their own tribe, at their going forth out of *Egypt*, but that God did also engage every man to know his tribe exactly; nay, he compelled them all, in a manner, to study their own pedigrees, that every one might claim, and

reap the benefit of the law of Jubilee, which had the force of an entail in respect of every family, as I am now going to shew.

There are three things observable in that matter.

The first is, that it was by a superabundant precaution, that God would engage the tribes to continue distinguished from one another, and to preserve and study their several pedigrees; namely, he intended by that means to prevent the objection which might otherwise have been made, that it was impossible for a tribe, and a family in that tribe, to continue distinguished from the rest of the nation, for so many ages; for certainly, if all the tribes in that nation, and all the families in every tribe, did continue, by God's providence, so long distinguished from one another, there is no doubt to be made, but he could preserve the single tribe of Judah, and the family of the Messiah, distinguished from all other tribes and families of the people of Israel.

The second remark is, that it was for this distinction sake, that the books of the Old Testament were filled with genealogical tables: to what purpose else had books of that importance, and which treated of such great subjects, been filled with genealogies? Moses's books are full of them: the first book of Chronicles resumes those genealogies with all possible exactness: there is nothing more considerable in the book of Ruth, than the genealogy of David and his family.

The third remark is, that if the genealogy of the priests seem to have been better known than that of other families, by reason of their being the public ministers of religion, which seems to give the advantage of certainty of distinction to the tribe of Levi above that of Judah, in that particular; yet we find, that all the families of the whole nation took much the same care to preserve their own genealogies; so that if, after the Babylonian captivity, some particular persons were excluded from the priestly order, to

which they pretended, because they could not make out their pedigree, so likewise all were thrown out from the other tribes, that could not justify their lineal descent.

Nay, there is something further, deserves to be taken notice of, as being very singular, in that of Judah; and one ought here to consider a mystery of God's providence, and admire the wisdom of his conduct, in pursuing the design which Moses first sets down, and upon which one sees that the whole Jewish state was formed; for when God resolved that the Messiah should descend from the tribe of Judah, and the house of David, he made it more particularly known and distinguished than any other family in the whole nation, and for that reason he sets David upon the throne.

Every one knows, that in every kingdom the genealogy of a king, and of the royal family, is, of all others, the most publicly known.

Now, if the blood-royal alone is always distinguished, how much more must it be so, when that supreme dignity is conferred upon such a family, as God had particularly chosen, to have the Messiah, who is set forth as the desire of all nations, to be born out of it!

From hence I will boldly conclude, that the only end for which God raised David's family to the throne, was because the Messiah was really to be born out of that family, reduced to a low and private condition, which Isaiah foretold, saying, That *a rod should come forth out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch grow out of his roots;** and in another place, That *he should grow up as a root out of a dry ground;*† which was very agreeable to the character of a Prophet, and to the low state of humiliation in which our Saviour was to appear in the world.

* Isa. xi. † Isa. lii.

CHAP. XVII.

A Solution of some Difficulties in these Genealogies.

INDEED the dispersion of the ten tribes seems to be a very natural objection, to those who would dispute the reflections which I have already made upon these genealogies.

But after all, there is nothing in it but what confirms the more the said reflections.

And we may say, that the entire dispersion of the whole tribe of Ephraim, and of the others which adhered to it in Jeroboam's rebellion, is a mystery of providence which challenges our admiration, as much as the raising up that family to the throne, out of which the Messiah was to be born.

To apprehend this the better, we need only call to mind the pretensions of the tribe of Ephraim: this Ephraim was the younger brother of Manasseh; but Jacob had given him the birth-right, just as Isaac before had given it to Jacob, though it did of right belong to the elder brother.

Jacob had particularly blessed Ephraim, and even made it a form of blessing for after-ages, as we read in the book of Ruth, that there was one made for Pharez. Jacob had given to Joseph two portions in the land of *Canaan*, and Ephraim had the birth-right before Manasseh, by God's order: it was then very natural for the tribe of Ephraim, as all tribes did apply to themselves the several privileges promised to their respective heads, to look upon themselves as having a particular right to God's blessing.

And they thought this right of theirs was plainly made out, as by Joseph's dreams, so especially by the words of that prediction which Jacob gave in favour of Ephraim, the words of which ran so very high, that after such a prejudice, there might very

well be a fair pretence for the hope which the tribe of Ephraim had once to see a Messiah come out of their tribe, as those of Judah expected one out of theirs.

If to all this we add, that Jeroboam's rebellion was authorised by a prophetical inspiration, and by a special sign of God's approbation; and that on the other hand he desired to propose to his people the two calves which he set up in *Dan* and *Bethel*, as symbols of the Deity only to pursue the ideas of Pharaoh's dreams, which Joseph interpreted, the representation whereof did clearly shew both the greatness of Joseph, and the particular care of God's providence over him;* it was then natural to the men of Ephraim to feed themselves with such hopes, as the Jews teach us they did, when, even to this very day, they speak of a Messiah of the tribe of Ephraim.

What did God then do, to obviate these pretensions of the tribe of Ephraim? He dispersed them, together with the other nine tribes that submitted to the authority of its kings, and so confounded them with all those tribes which followed their fortune, that, though there should be still some Fphraimites in the world, yet it would be impossible for any of them to justify his pedigree so clearly, as that any Messiah really descended from that very tribe, could, by establishing his genealogy, put his being of the tribe of Ephraim beyond all contest.

Now, according to this notion of things, it is visible (if we may be allowed to enter into the counsels of God) that he did particularly preserve the tribes of Levi and Benjamin, with the tribe of Judah, which was the only tribe that was to be preserved of necessity.

First, because, as St. Paul to the Hebrews observes, there was nothing ever said, as to the Messiah, of the tribe of Levi.

* Talm. in Succa, c. 5. in Gem.

Secondly, because God, would, by that means, confound the more effectually all the claims of the tribe of Ephraim.

For, in short, if the tribe of Ephraim was invested by God with the kingdom over nine tribes of the people of Israel, so had the tribe of Benjamin been raised up before to the sovereignty over all Israel, over the tribe of Judah, and even that of Ephraim itself.

If the tribe of Ephraim was descended from a younger brother, to whom Jacob had given his blessing, in prejudice of Manasseh his elder brother, (which is considerable, because God hath almost constantly preferred the younger before the elder) so the tribe of Benjamin was descended from him that was both the younger brother of Joseph himself, and the youngest of all Jacob's children; notwithstanding which, the tribe of Benjamin did freely yield to the tribe of Judah, and granted that the glory of giving birth to the Messiah, was wholly due to them.

Be it as it will, there are two reflections more which must be made concerning these genealogies, which appear very natural in this place.

The first is, that both St. Matthew and St. Luke do begin their Gospel with the genealogy of the Messiah.

The other is, that some time after St. Paul condemns the study of genealogies, which was still much in use among the Jews, as vain. Why therefore is there such a different conduct amongst the disciples of the same master?

Certainly, whoever shall consider with attention the grounds which I have laid down before, must acknowledge, that both St. Matthew, and St. Luke, ought to have begun their books, as they have done, with the genealogy of the Messiah.

For, first of all, it was necessary that the descent of the Messiah from Abraham by David, should be clearly made out: it was requisite therefore that they should set down such a genealogy as was known by

the whole Jewish nation: now this they have done with very great care; and the thing was so easy, and so well known, that even a blind man of the neighbourhood of *Samaria*, the chief city of the kings of *Ephraim*, did publicly call Jesus the son of David.

But, on the other side, St. Paul's forbidding the study of genealogies, does not at all contradict the method of those two Evangelists.

In short, he pursues the very same notions: he saw, that the converted Jews applied themselves to the study of genealogies, which was then so great a part of the study of their nation: it is still practised among the Jews to that degree, that since their dispersion they gave an exact relation of all the Doctors and Rabbies amongst them who have preserved the tradition, and who were proselites of justice.* What therefore was to be done in this case? He took it for granted, that God had engaged every Jew to study his own pedigree with care, for no other end but only to have that of the Messiah distinctly known whenever he should come.

But the use of these genealogies being once over, by the Messiah's coming into the world, he observes, with reason, that it was no longer necessary to keep up the vain study of all those genealogies.

So that we see he speaks against the study of pedigrees, much upon the same grounds as in other places he inveighs against circumcision; for since the chiefest use of genealogies, as well as of circumcision, was to distinguish Abraham's posterity from the rest of mankind, till the Messiah was come, the use of these two observations was naturally to cease after he was once come.

It is, no doubt, for the same reason, that whereas the Jews in the Apostle's time took great care, upon all occasions, to take notice of the tribe from which they were descended, as well as to set down the

* Maimon. Præf. ad Jad. Chazaka.

names of their fathers; yet one sees that the Apostles did not at all affect it. And if St. Paul mentions his being a Benjamite, it was for a particular reason; for otherwise, as he preached down the distinction betwixt Jews and Gentiles, so he declared himself with the same earnestness against the distinctions which were observed amongst their tribes.

CHAP. XVIII.

That the Manner whereby the Law of Moses fixed the People of Israel to the Land of Canaan, was to keep them separated from other Nations.

ONE of the chiefest means which God made use of to distinguish his people of Israel from the rest of mankind, was so to fix their affections upon the land of *Canaan*, that they should look upon it as a country which belonged to them by a particular concession from God, which derogated from the Canaanites' right, to whom that country fell in the division of the earth that was made amongst the children of Noah, or which re-established the posterity of Shem in their just rights, to whom, if we may credit the ancient tradition, related by St. Epiphanius,* this country did really belong by virtue of that division amongst the three sons of Noah, though afterwards they were driven out of it by the posterity of Ham.

Moses seems to have expressed this truth, when he saith, Gen. xii. that when Abraham came to *Canaan*, the Canaanite was already in the land; that is, he had already invaded it: neither can we refer what he relates in the xivth chapter, concerning the war which the kings from the east came to make

† Hæres. lxvi. n. 84.

against the kings of *Sodom* and *Gomorrha*, to any thing else.

It was then, for this reason, that long before Moses's time, God took Abraham out of *Chaldea*, from amongst Shem's posterity, to bring him into *Canaan* amongst the Hivites, the Amorites, and other nations all equally descended from Ham, whom God had cursed.

God could have placed Abraham any where else; but he chose to bring him into a country which the posterity of Ham had seized upon already, rather than into a place possessed by the posterity of Japhet, on purpose that the jealousy might be the greater betwixt Abraham and the inhabitants of the country into which God had brought him.

Nevertheless, God did not give him at first an entire possession, but only promised him that his posterity should enjoy it, and in the mean while invested him, beforehand, with a right to it, by the purchase of a field for a burying-place, wherein his wife, himself, and his children, were buried; by which means he strongly fixed his own mind, and the hopes of his posterity.

In short, it is evident, that all the glory which Jacob found in *Egypt*, when he was invited thither by Joseph, did not make him forget the right which he claimed upon that land, by virtue of the sepulchre both of his father and grandfather, that was there. For Moses informs us, that he desired to be carried thither after his death, and that he did expressly require this duty from Joseph and his other children, who paid it in so very solemn a manner, and with a mourning so very great and famous, that the name of *Abel-Mizraim* continued to that very place where the Canaanites saw the solemnization of that funeral by the sons of Jacob, who were attended by great numbers of Egyptians.

One sees that Jacob's children still entertained the same hope: Joseph solemnly engaged his children to

carry his bones into the land of *Canaan:* and one may judge that the other Patriarchs were not less solicitous to require the same office at the hands of their children, as St. Stephen* supposes it, Acts vii. agreeably to the common opinion of the Jews: all which shews, that Abraham's posterity had their hearts set upon his sepulchre, as upon the pledge and security of God's promise, that they should be once possessed of that land where he was buried.

And as the carrying the body of Jacob into *Canaan*, sufficiently shewed what were the claims of the Israelites: so the same was very evident by their care in keeping themselves unmixed with the Egyptians, all the time they sojourned in *Egypt*. The splendor of Joseph was a natural engagement for them to settle themselves there for ever: besides, their vast increase forced them in a manner to it. For a long time the miseries which they endured, invited them to seek the alliances of the Egyptians by marriages, and to mix themselves with a people who were their masters, and so to renounce hopes which appeared to be so very groundless. They seemed to have been warranted by Joseph's example, who had married an Egyptian. However, one never finds that they tried that method. One sees on the contrary, that there was little correspondence between the Hebrews and Egyptians in their sacred things; for the Hebrews sacrificed to God the abomination of the Egyptians, that is, those very things which the Egyptians worshipped.

One sees afterwards, by the great number of flocks which they drove along with them at their going out of *Egypt*, that they had continued to follow the profession of their ancestors, who were shepherds, a very odious employment to the Egyptians.

One sees at last, that after the many miracles which Moses wrought in the Egyptian court, this

* Jalkut. ex Siphre, fol. 311. col. 2.

people followed God's conduct, and went out of that country, to possess the land of *Canaan*, which none of them had ever seen; and yet they looked upon the obtaining it as a blessing they could not miss of.

There are several things very remarkable upon that subject.

The first is, that some Egyptians went out with the Israelites to dwell with them in the land of *Canaan;* which was done, not only that there might be some indisputable witnesses, from among the enemies of God, of the truth and greatness of the miracles which Moses had wrought amongst them, which also was a presage of the calling of the Gentiles to the faith, by their insertion into the body of the Jews; but also that there might be some witnesses of the extraordinary affection which the people of Israel had for the land of *Canaan*, and of their claims to it by virtue of God's promise, that he would put them into possession of it. For otherwise it is not a common thing that a colony of slaves should be suffered to run away, much less that they should persuade their masters to forsake their own country, and their settlements at home, to go and conquer another for them.

The second remark is, that God made the Jews travel for forty years in the deserts of *Arabia*, not only to make them forget any ties they might have had to return again into *Egypt*, and to accustom them to depend wholly upon Divine providence, but also to redouble their desires after the possession of this land of promise.

It was for the same reason that God forbad them so straitly either the mingling with, or the settling themselves amongst, the Midianites, though Moses had given an example by marrying Sephora; or the Edomites, or the Ishmaelites, or the Moabites, or the Ammonites, though all those nations were descended from Terah, their common father, or from the Patriarchs.

In execution of which severe prohibition, God commanded the Jews to put all those to the sword who should make any alliance with those nations, as we have instance of it, Numb. xxiii. after the description of Balaam's prophecies.

And it could be for no other end that he so straitly charged the Israelites to cut off the Hivites, Amorites, and other nations of *Canaan*, even to the women and little children, but in pursuance of his first design to prevent all mixture of his people with those nations, which without that extreme rigour would infallibly and insensibly have come to pass.

I know very well that God preserved the Gibeonites, by ratifying that alliance which gave leave to those people, though of the posterity of Ham, to continue amongst his own people in the land of *Canaan;* but though God did in effect preserve the Gibeonites amongst the Jews, yet he forced them to undergo the drudgery, and servile offices of the tabernacle, and that they might be kept, as unquestionable witnesses of the Hebrews' pretensions, and of their miraculous conquest of the land of *Canaan;* for the continuance of that nation in the heart of the country, and their submitting to the drudgery of carrying wood and water for the use of the tabernacle, though they were at first of another religion, was, as I have observed already, a continual subject of admiration to the posterity both of the Jews and of the Gibeonites themselves.

CHAP. XIX.

That the Law tied the People of Israel to the Land of Canaan, and by several other Means established the Distinction betwixt Tribes and Families amongst them.

ONE may say, that one of the most effectual means which God used to fix his people to the land of *Canaan*, was the law which he gave them to meet thrice a year, and celebrate three solemn feasts together, which hardly gave them leave to travel far into other countries, and engaged them, every time they met, to renew, in the public acts of their religion, the memory and the ideas of their hopes; and they conduced to this design of God in this manner.

Those feasts were celebrated at three times, which were the most commodious seasons of the year for travelling, betwixt the months of March and October: the celebration of the passover was upon the fourteenth day after the appearance of the moon in March; the pentecost was fifty days after; and the feast of the tabernacles lasted from the first to the tenth day of September.

In short, the law which obliged the Jews to assist at the celebration of those feasts, required the appearance of all the males of twenty years of age and upwards, so very rigorously, that there was no dispensation; for all (without exception) were then obliged to appear: so that, even during the dispersions of their nation, the Jews who lived out of *Judea* assisted always at the celebration of those three feasts with great care.

This was a visible way of keeping the tribes of Israel distinct, by giving each of them a separate portion in the land of *Canaan*, and by fixing them inseparably to it; as the whole nation was in like

manner distinguished, by its being placed in a country entirely by itself.

We see accordingly, that God hath observed that method, by giving a law which enjoins the division of the land of *Canaan* to be made into as many portions as there were tribes, only excepting the tribe of Levi, because the Levites, as being the public ministers of their religion, were dispersed amongst the other tribes, that they might more conveniently attend to the instruction of the people.

I shall not here take notice of the miracle which was evident in that division, which was an exact accomplishment of the oracle which Jacob and Moses uttered a little before their deaths.

But I shall observe, first, that as the design of God was to divide that people into tribes, that the tribe of Judah, from which the Messiah was to be born, might be the better distinguished and known, so he would, for the same reason, allot the cave of *Machpela*, the sepulchre of the Patriarchs, to the share of the tribe of Judah, as also *Ephratah*, the place where Rachel was buried, which was afterwards called *Bethlehem*, the town where David had his birth, and which was foretold by the Prophet Micah under the name of *Ephratah*, as the place where the Messiah should be born in the fulness of time.

We must besides take notice of two particular regulations, by which God fixed his people in the land of *Canaan*, and preserved a distinct idea of this first division of that country.

The first is the law of *jubilee*.

The second is the law of lineal retreats.

In short, by the law of the jubilee, which returned every fifty years, and by which every one that could justify his pedigree, was reinstated in the possessions of his ancestors, God obliged that people to keep up a distinct knowledge of the first division made under

Joshua,* and which is described in that book which contains his history, much more effectually than if he had made a law for that very purpose: so that, though the field of *Ephratah* had been never so often alienated, yet it always returned to the tribe of Judah and so afterwards into David's family, because it was at first the lot of his ancestors.

This law of jubilee preserved a distinct knowledge of the several tribes and families; and it also kept up a distinct idea of their genealogies, which must be preserved entire of necessity, that they might maintain their right to the inheritance of their ancestors.

It would be to no purpose to object against this observation, that it was impossible to know certainly which tribe, and much less which family, every estate did belong to, because one sees that the first proselytes who went out with the Israelites, shared the land of *Canaan* together with them: for one sees on the contrary,

First, that God would not allow any of the Moabites and Ammonites to become proselytes before the tenth generation.

And secondly, that he debarred the Edomites from being admitted to make profession of Judaism before the third generation, which excluded them for ever from any possessions in the land of *Canaan*.

And thirdly, one ought to observe the difference betwixt an Egyptian proselyte, and a native Jew: the quality of a proselyte gave permission to an Egyptian to live amongst the Jews, and to profess their religion; but it gave him no right to possess any of their land.

And then, besides that, those Egyptian proselytes had a particular way of praying by themselves, different from that of the Jews, as the Jews still testify.† They could not possess any estate in land amongst them: this is so true, that it was once found necessary

* Joshua xiv. &c. † Massa Biccour. c. 1. s. 4.

to make a particular regulation for the daughters of Zelophehad,* that they might have their division, which was granted only under certain conditions, because the land was not to be divided, but amongst the males of the people of Israel.

But this is very considerable, that, by this law of the jubilee, God fixed the Jews to the land of *Canaan*, by giving the children a power to look upon themselves not only as the presumptive heirs of their parents, but to consider their parents only as usufructuaries, since all their possessions in land were so entailed, that the children, or right heirs of any man, could not miss of the reversion; because, whatever alienation was made, it could last but for a time, to the year of jubilee, which restored all the alienated possessions, absolutely and entirely, to the right heirs.

Now, that this law was always looked upon as a fundamental law amongst the Jews, appears clearly from the words in Leviticus,† and from the history of Naboth, which holy man rather chose to die than to comply with the unjust desire of Ahab, who would have forced Naboth to sell his estate absolutely, notwithstanding God's express prohibition.

The exemplary vengeance which God took upon Naboth's murder, and the relation of it recorded in Scripture, is a further confirmation of this same truth; if a king of Israel durst not at first infringe that law, if it was not violated by any other than Jezabel, who was a foreign princess; if the transgression of that law was punished in such an exemplary manner; who can doubt but that it was particularly observed in the tribe of Judah, as a fundamental law by which God tied up his people inseparably to this very country?

One needs only make some few reflections upon those words which God makes use of, Ezek. xlvi. to

* Numb. xxvii. † Lev. xxv. 23. ‡ Kings xxi.

agree to what I say, if those reflections which I have made already upon Naboth's murder be also added to them.

One may observe upon the same subject, that though God had several times subjected the Jews to a foreign power, yet he never suffered the whole nation to be all carried away out of *Canaan* at one time, nor yet to continue in captivity for the time of two whole jubilees; they were but seventy years in *Babylon*, which was the furthest place that they were ever carried into.

From whence we may naturally conclude, that their genealogies could not be confounded in so short a time, because many that were at the consecration of the second temple had seen the first: nor could the distinct knowledge of the several divisions of their estates be obliterated; because those of every tribe who continued still in the land, might visibly keep them up.

And we here of necessity ought to observe in the first place, what we may read in the xxxiid chapter of Jeremiah,* concerning the sale of a field which Jeremiah bought:

And secondly, what we read Nehemiah the vth, where he is troubled to see the alienation of their fields, which was a consequence of their misery:

And thirdly, the manner how that people were restored to their estates, according to the fundamental laws of their state.

Another very effectual means to fix that people to the land of *Canaan*, and to preserve their families there certainly without confusion, was the law of lineal retreats, which God instituted for this very purpose.

For in short, when this rule was laid down, that upon the failure of an heir in any family, the next kinsman was the heir at law, it appears plainly, that

* Jerem xxxii.

every one was obliged, for his own interest, to inquire with diligence into the genealogical lives of his own tribe, that he might instruct himself in the state of the several families of his kindred, and of the several degrees of proximity of blood whereby they might be related, because the exact knowledge of these lists, and of those several degrees of kindred, were absolutely necessary to make use of this right of lineal retreats.

There were two other laws which contributed also to this; one whereof regulated all that was to be done, when there were none but daughters left in a family: a famous instance of which, we have in the history of the daughters of Zelophehad, set down twice by Moses, on purpose, no doubt, that it should be the more taken notice of, as I intend to shew particularly in another place.

The other law regulated all that the next kinsman of any one that died childless, was obliged to do in respect of the relict, and of the estate of the deceased, if he intended to redeem it. One finds in the book of Ruth, an illustrious example of the execution of this law, which may be found Deut. xxv.

Now after all this, let any one judge, whether there could be any stronger ties than these, to oblige the people of Israel to continue in the land of *Canaan;* and whether the division which God made of it, betwixt their several tribes and families, was not an infallible means to distinguish them certainly one from another.

CHAP. XX.

That the Laws which Moses made concerning the State of Virginity, did principally relate also to the Messiah, which holds also as to several other Laws.

HITHERTO I have shewed the care which God took to distinguish his people of Israel from all other nations of the world, and I afterwards shewed what care he took to keep the distinctions which he first set up amongst the tribes; and I afterwards explained those laws which he gave, to oblige every family in each tribe to remain distinct; and I afterwards made it manifest, that the division of the land of *Canaan* was a very proper means to execute this design of God.

All which shews, that God intended to make it easy for every man to distinguish the Messiah, when it should be once known that he was to be born out of the family of Jesse, as it was afterwards foretold by several express oracles.

But as there ought to be something supernatural in the birth of the Messiah, who was to be born of a Virgin, so we ought to see what care God took in his laws, that the birth of the Messiah, even in this very article, might not be a fact too difficult to be acknowledged and established.

In the first promise which God made to man in these words, *That the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head*, being joined with Isaiah's prophecy, *Behold, a virgin shall conceive*, &c. Is. vii. it is visible, that for the accomplishment of these oracles, one ought to suppose that the Messiah must be born of a virgin, as the Christians profess to believe. Why should God otherwise have taken care to insinuate, from the very beginning of the world,

that the Messiah was to be born of the seed of a woman, without mentioning any thing of a man, if he had not supposed that he should be born without the operation of a man? And why should Isaiah propose the conceiving of a virgin, as an effect wholly supernatural?

In short, God did therefore by his laws not only secure the state of virginity, that this thing might not be ambiguous when it should be accomplished, but (as we shall see here) he has by these laws made it extremely illustrious.

First, besides that, God would have the punishment of death inflicted upon them that were at any time found guilty of sins against nature, as also upon them that should be proved to have had any incestuous commerce with those that were nearly related to them, and to whom either the nearness of blood, or affinity, gave them a more free and familiar access. He moreover straitly commanded, that all prostitutes should be put to death without mercy.*

Secondly, he is not contented to forbid fornication, and adultery in general, by condemning to death those that expressly should be convicted of it, and by awarding the same sentence against him that should happen to corrupt a contracted virgin, and the virgin herself;† but he also hinders men, by two ways, from falling into sins of impurity; he permitted, on the one hand, a divorce where the wife did not please her husband, and on the other hand he allowed of polygamy. This toleration made that virgins, on the one side, not remaining too long unmarried, were not easily to be corrupted; and, on the other side, men were not very forward to debauch those women whom they did not intend to marry, or to keep when married; for he that was compelled to marry a virgin whom he had seduced,

* Exod. xxii. Deut. xxii. Lev. xviii. Lev. xx. Deut. xxiii. 17.
† Exod. xxii. Lev. xx. Deut. xxii.

was expressly forbidden to put her away for ever after.*

It is natural to observe the design of those laws amongst the people of Israel.† In short, the desire of issue made them marry very young; most of the men were married at eighteen years of age.

Therefore all virgins thought it a shame to be unmarried; therefore God makes them speak, in the third of Isaiah, in that manner, when seven women would marry one man, without asking any thing for diet or clothes, provided only that he would take away that reproach of living without having children. It was this desire of posterity which made the women look upon barrenness as a curse.

Again, this vehement desire of children made eunuchs to be regarded as men particularly abhorred of God, not only by the Jews, but also by the Heathens themselves:‡ although afterwards they passed for holy men, because they designed to imitate what (as they were told) had happened to Noah, by his son Ham, which introduced the custom amongst the Assyrians of castrating themselves, that they might be priests.

Thirdly, God commanded, that any virgin which was betrothed to a husband, and was corrupted in her father's house, or that was ravished without calling for help, should be punished with death:§ so that all the virgins were indispensably engaged, for fear of losing both life and honour together, to preserve their virginity with all possible care.

But here is a fourth law concerning this matter, whereby God obliged the parents of all contracted virgins to take a more than ordinary care of them, when he commands, Deut. xxii. 21. *That a virgin for whom the tokens of virginity were not found, should be brought out of the door of her father's*

* Deut. xxii. † Massec. Avoth. c. 5. ‡ Lucian de Eunuch, p. 537. Lucian *de Dea Syria*, p. 1069. § Deut. xxii.

house, and there be stoned to death by the men of the city; for so her parents were, by that means, made partakers of the punishment of her crime, and their negligence was severely punished by a shameful execution as dishonoured their whole family.

Fifthly, God submitted women to the examination of their husbands to whom they were married: nay, one would think that he intended to raise the jealousy of husbands, when he gives them leave to bring their wives to a public trial, and to punish them with death, when they did not preserve the tokens of their virginity.

It was for that reason that he commanded* that the parents or near relations of the young married women thus complained of, should produce upon all such occasions the tokens of the virginity of those daughters which they disposed in marriage, which was usually done with many solemn circumstances and formalities.

And here are three things which deserve to be attentively considered.

The first is, the custom that was amongst the Jews, for parents never to let their virgin daughters go out of their houses; which custom made them be called *concealed,* in opposition to those that went abroad, that is, that were prostitutes.

The second is, another custom which the just desire of preserving the virginity of their daughters against all accidents, had introduced amongst that people; which was, that all their virgins did wear a sort of fetters, which are called, in the Talmud, *cevalim,* which are described by the famous Moses, the son of Maimon, in this manner: *Cevalim sunt compedes in forma periscelidis, inter quos interposuerunt catenulas, illis compedibus ornabant se virgines, ut non incederent passu*

* Deut. xxii.

*magno, ne contigeret ipsis damnum in virginitate sua.** This description may be thought to be one of the foolish fancies of the modern Jews, if we did not meet with proofs of the practice of that custom in more ancient times. In short, one sees, in the third of Isaiah, that chains are reckoned up amongst other ornaments of the daughters of Israel, which God threatened to take away from them, when he would force them to go captives into *Babylon.*

The third is, an ancient tradition mentioned in the Pirke Eliezer, in the sixteenth chapter, *Solent Israelitæ digito educere virginitatem, ne incidant in dubitationem vel suspicionem, juxta illud*, sumat pater & mater puellæ, &c.

In a word, it seems that, for fear lest these tokens of virginity should be thought to be obscure and ambiguous by their husbands, that God has provided for the securing of the virginity of their young women before marriage by a miracle, the experience whereof was ordinary and common amongst so jealous a people; I mean, the waters of jealousy†, which all women, whose carriage was suspected by their husbands, were obliged to drink, by which God did either miraculously justify them, or else he began to inflict a punishment upon them, which was so much the more dreadful and exemplary, as it proceeded from the hand of God himself. This miracle lasted to the destruction of the second temple, as the Jews themselves tell us in that title of their Talmud§ which concerns women suspected of adultery.

However, as God works no miracles without great reasons, so he here made a law, the observance whereof was very rigorous; which was, that he would not suffer any woman to be married when

* Ad Massec. Sabbath. c. 6. J. 4.
† Numb. v. Joseph. l. 3. Antiq. p. 95. § Sota, c. 9.

there was the least probability that they had their courses, but that they should be separated at that time, as unclean.

The reason of this law was, because it was then almost impossible but that the lewd women might have imposed upon their husbands in the marks of their virginity, which at that time are very uncertain; not to say, that, as a politic lawgiver, he might prescribe the observation of this law, lest the commonwealth of the Jews should have been overstocked with weak and sickly people.

Lastly, one sees that God himself has fastened a blot upon leprous persons, because they were supposed to have been conceived when their mothers had their courses* : and hereupon was that law of God founded, which debarred lepers for ever from the right of coming into the congregation of his people.

One ought to make the same observation upon those that were unlawfully begotten; for they were deprived of the right of entering into the congregation; and how innocent soever they were, as to the lewdness of those who gave them their lives, yet they were thus with them made partakers of the punishment of their sin.

If one considers all these several laws attentively, one shall find, on the one hand, that several of them were of very little moment, except we suppose that God intended to secure the state of virginity by them beyond all danger; and on the other hand, one shall find that some of them are very severe about things which do not seem to deserve so terrible a rigour.

But if we consider them according to God's design, as he hath afterwards particularly explained it, they will appear, I am confident, to be all very worthy of the wisdom of such a lawgiver.

* Isidor. Pelus, l. 5. Ep. 117, Joseph. Antiq. l. 3. p. 94.

One needs only reflect upon that method of God that I have now explained, to see that nothing can be conceived to be better managed, than this model according to the design which God himself had drawn.

One may make the same observations, and examine the same strokes of the wisdom of God, in several other precautions which he made use of to make the Messiah be perfectly distinguished according to the several characters under which he was to be proposed afterwards by the ministry of the Prophets.

One sees that the Messiah, being to be born of a virgin, was to be a first-born; and for that reason, we find many laws which distinguish in general the privileges of the first-born.

So it appears, by the xviiith of Deuteronomy, that the Messiah was to be a prophet; and therefore God afterwards gave notice by the Prophets of all those lights which should particularly appear in him. In prospect of this, God gave, by the ministry of Moses, such characters as would distinguish the true Prophets from those who endeavoured to usurp that name.

It appears also, that because God was to communicate to the Messiah, a power of working miracles (which Moses intimates, by saying that he was to be a Prophet like unto him), therefore Isaiah specifies the character of those miracles in chapter xxxv. of his prophecy; and God explains, in particular, the laws concerning the blind and the lame; and for the same reason, he gives an account of all sorts of leprosy, that it might be distinctly known which was incurable.

It is easy to those who will attend to the laws of Moses, to see that they were subservient to this design of God, in pursuance of those prospects which we have already set down.

CHAP. XXI.

That it was the Design of God, by all these Ceremonies, and particularly by that Veneration which he inspired the Jews with, for the Tabernacle, to preserve the Ideas of the Messiah, whom he had promised, in their Minds, by distinguishing them from all other Nations.

AFTER all those observations which I have made upon the several laws that God made use of to execute his design of fixing his people to a certain place, and there to keep them separate, it is natural to judge, that the ceremonial laws which he gave them for the regulating their outward worship, were also intended for the same end. This I must shew, in respect of the holiness which God ascribes to the land of *Canaan*, and in respect of the whole service of the tabernacle, of its mysterious construction in all its parts; and in respect also of the raising of the material temple, afterwards, to be as it were the centre of their whole religion.

It was certainly for this purpose that he particularly consecrated several things to himself, as the first fruits, and the first-born; and that he set apart certain times, as the first day of the month, and certain solemn feasts, besides the sabbath-day, which were celebrated long before. And he also consecrated several places, as the towns of refuge; and yet more particularly, the tabernacle and the temple: but it was especially for that reason, that he had consecrated certain rites and ceremonies, certain sacrifices, both of animate and inanimate things, and certain offerings of gold and silver, perfumes, &c.

One sees that he rejected any first fruits that did not grow in the land of *Canaan:* one sees, that though some sacrifices were common to the Jews and their neighbours, yet he distinguished them by so many circumstances, that they were much different from the others: thus he forbids them to make use of statues before which other nations used to sacrifice at that time; and he commanded them not to sacrifice upon high places, where the heathens used to make their offerings very early in the morning, at sun-rise, which gave rise to their worship of the rising sun.

But there is nothing more discovers the design of God, than the laws by which he fixed their worship, first to the tabernacle, and afterwards to the temple, at the places where God did particularly reside. One may say, that it was for that reason God commanded the representations of angels, and of his law, and of the manna, to be preserved there; all which, besides that they were memorials of the ancient apparitions and favours of God to that people, they were express figures of God's glory, of his will, and of his miraculous power: he added also a candlestick with seven branches, a table covered with loaves, and an altar of incense, which were figures of the seven planets of this visible world, of the blessings which we enjoy by nature, and of those acknowledgments which we owe unto God for all these: he commanded also, that none should offer sacrifices in any other place except the temple.

He would not permit that any but those who were purified according to the law should enter into it; he excluded all uncircumcised persons for ever; as Moses had formerly been commanded to pull off his shoes in the desert, at his approaching to the burning bush, so every one that entered into the temple, was to enter barefoot, as a mark of that respect which had formerly been exacted of Moses.

And what other reason but that, could oblige him to give, both at the consecration of the temple, and afterwards, so many sensible marks of his presence? That cloud which was called his Glory, rested there; the Urim and Thummim, which was an oracle for that whole nation, was there; there was a daily sacrifice offered up for the whole people; there were celebrated the three solemn feasts of the passover, of pentecost, and of tabernacles: he forbad them to sacrifice any where else, and he gave frequent and illustrious oracles at that place.

One ought also to observe, that after this temple (to which all the glory of the tabernacle was transmitted) was fixed at Jerusalem, he ordered it to be such a sensible mark of his presence, that when we read the history of Israel's march in the desert, we find that the tabernacle was the image of the temple, and built after its model: so that as the tabernacle always stood in the midst of the tents of the Levites, and the Levites in the midst of the whole camp of all the tribes of Israel, who were all listed under their proper standards; so one sees afterwards, that the temple, the Levites, and the people of *Jerusalem*, were placed, according to their different degrees of holiness, as they were to approach to the most holy place, which was the habitation of his holiness.

Certainly, one may say, that the building up of a tabernacle, or of a temple, seems to be directly contrary to the nature of religion, according to which, God who is a spirit, will be worshipped in spirit, and in truth; so that this seems to have been quitted for a time, when he commanded the building of a tabernacle.

But really there was nothing more agreeable to the design which God had formed at first, as to that people: he intended to make it visible; and it appears that nothing could be more effectual to make it so, than the double necessity to which that whole people was reduced, to meet in a body several times

every year in the same place, and to offer all their sacrifices in the tabernacle, and to be there perpetually employed in the ceremonial service, which did inseparably draw them thither, and fix them there.

The end of all those visible assemblies, was to perpetuate the knowledge of the principal verities of their religion, and especially to renew perpetually the hopes of that people, as to the Messiah, who was promised to them from God.

For God having shortened the long lives which men commonly enjoyed in the beginning before they went out of *Egypt*, so that five or six persons could no longer preserve the tradition of 2000 years as they had done till Moses's time, God was of necessity obliged to make use of some other means to supply that defect.

He had already made use of several before; amongst which, was that which we find prescribed Deut. xxvii. where he ordered the building of an altar with rough stones, whereupon the names of the twelve tribes, and the whole law, were to be engraved.

He afterwards followed other methods; and thus we see that Samuel, following Moses and Joshua's example, repeats before a solemn assembly of the people met at *Gilgal*, for the consecration of Saul, the things that came to pass during the government of Bedan or Sampson, of Jephtha and his own.

But yet the best way was to fix this people to one tabernacle, wherein we see that besides the monuments which preserved the memory of the great miracles that God had wrought at the foundation of the Jewish commonwealth, as the pot of manna, Aaron's rod that blossomed, the plates of the altar that had been made out of the censers of Korah, Dathan, and their confederates.—

One sees that the law, and the books of the covenant, were deposited there by God's order, and the principal transactions and deliverances that were

wrought by God in the behalf of that people, were continually celebrated with hymns and other tokens of public thankfulness.

It was, no doubt, upon this account, that he caused the book of the law to be laid up there, with many ceremonies and expiations; and that he enjoined it to be read publicly in the presence of the whole congregation every seven years; one sees that he commanded that every family should read this book continually, and that all should entertain their wives and children, from their tenderest years, with the design of the law, night and day, in the country, and in the town, at all times, and in all places.

One sees that God engaged them to it, not only by an express command, but also by an indispensable necessity, because he made it death for any man to violate any of those ceremonial laws, from a principle of obstinacy: no pardon could be obtained for the transgressions committed through ignorance, before they were expiated by certain sacrifices, the forms whereof were scrupulously prescribed in the law, and which could be violated upon no account whatever.

If one considers those things, he may say that the Jews had scarce one moment free in their lives; so pressing was the necessity which lay upon them to consult the law of God, the regulations of which were so very exact and particular, that there, no actions, public or private, could happen, but what were regulated and determined by these constitutions.

If a beast was born, the owner was to examine whether it was the first-born or no, whether it was clean or unclean, and whether it was to be redeemed, with several other things of this nature.

If a woman was big with child, there were many questions to be asked: when she came to lie-in, several very different ceremonies were practised, according as the child was first-born, or not. The law

enjoined various purifications, according as the woman brought forth a son or a daughter.

God had prescribed a great number of laws for all the accidents of life; for marriages, for successions, for mourning, for unforeseen accidents, as the death of a man that was killed without the design of his murderer; for the several crimes that might be committed, in their several pollutions and sequestrations, &c.

It seems that this whole people, from the time that they came to the use of their reason, to the time of their death, was still continually obliged to keep up a correspondence with the priests and Levites, whom God had for this purpose dispersed amongst all the tribes of Israel, and to consult the law and the testimony, to be instructed in the manner of governing themselves; but particularly, they were to look upon the temple and the tabernacle as the centre of their whole religion: and how could they do this, without carrying their prospect at the same time to those great promises of the Messiah, of which the Israelites were depositaries? I say, upon those promises, which raised up so many jealousies betwixt their forefathers and the ancestors of those neighbouring nations, with whom they had always some controversy, and were to be considered as glorious and honourable to the whole nation.

CHAP. XXII.

That it appears by the Books of Moses, that this whole Model which God had framed, was to last but until the Coming of the Messiah.

BUT if we find in Moses's law a severe restriction in all that belongs to the execution of the promise of the Messiah (which shews that God intended to have

that nation distinguished from all others, till the blessed seed was come); if we find that he restrained that promise to one tribe, one town, one family, one particular individual person in that family, that they might not be to seek in a confused crowd of a whole people, made up of several millions of persons, or in a whole tribe, or even in a city filled up with several families; if, upon this account his birth was restrained to one people, one tribe, one little town, and one single family which was settled there, the Jews could not but observe that it was God's design to break all those restrictions, and to follow quite another method, when the Messiah was once come.

For, in the first place, the first promise of the Messiah was expressed in very general terms, which mentioned a common benefit to all the sons of Adam. This promise was made before God had rejected Cain's posterity, by preferring that of Seth; it was made before the restriction was made to Noah in Seth's family, and to Shem in Noah's family.

Secondly, God, who by circumcision had distinguished Abraham and his posterity from the rest of the family of Shem, did expressly promise to Abraham, that in his seed all the nations of the world should be blessed. This promise was made also before God had restrained the promise to the person of Isaac in prejudice of Ishmael, and then afterwards to the person of Jacob in prejudice of Esau.

Thirdly, one sees this same truth yet more clearly explained out of Jacob's oracle concerning Judah, Gen. xlix. wherein Jacob expressly foretels that the Messiah should be the expectation of the nations; that is to say, the comfort, the glory, the hope, and the joy of all the nations of the universe.

As this was a capital truth, so God proposed it by Balaam, at the Israelite's entering into *Canaan*, that they might thus understand, that all those dis-

tinctions which their separation, living in *Canaan* from the rest of the world, might keep up, were not always to last.

But this particular appears out of Moses's law, which allows of several sorts of proselytes, receiving some without tying them to the observance of all the ceremonies in the law; which it would never have done, if it had been absolutely necessary to be a Jew before they have a share in the benefits of the promise.

Secondly, it supposes that God was to remove that people out of *Canaan* into remote countries, and to disperse them, as it were, into the uttermost parts of the world, which was done by Divine Providence, only to publish the promise of the Messiah, to establish the belief in the Prophets, and so to facilitate the calling of the Gentiles to the faith.

Thirdly, he declares expressly, as St. Paul observes, that he was to call his people, that which was not his people, that he might by that means provoke the people of Israel to jealousy. This notion of jealousy, mentioned by St. Paul, deserves to be taken notice of with very great care, if we reflect upon the spirit of jealousy which reigned amongst the Israelites and their neighbours.

I shall take notice in another place, of the great number of oracles of David upon the same subject, although he otherwise insults upon the Moabites and Edomites, upon all occasions, and shews as much aversion and jealousy against those nations, as was possible for one that lived in a continual war with those people.

I shall also make some reflections upon Solomon's marriage with the princesses of *Tyre*, of *Sidon*, and of *Egypt;* that is to say, with the posterity of Ham, which was united to that of Judah, to take a part with them in the blessing; from whence it came to pass, that the Song that was written upon that marriage, was preserved as a piece divinely inspired, and

ought to be considered as a happy presage of the calling of the Gentiles to the communion of the Messiah.

One may also join here the manner of Solomon's giving to Hiram's subjects, who had helped him in the building of the temple, the country of *Chabal*, which was enclosed within *Judea*, although those people were of the Canaanites' posterity, upon whom Noah had particularly pronounced, *Cursed be Canaan.**

One may also see, that as God had permitted his people to be transported into *Chaldea* and *Babylon*, and had raised up there Prophets amongst them, on purpose to acquaint the world with the glorious hopes of the Jews, so he caused the books of Scripture to be translated into Greek about 300 years before our Saviour's birth, not only to prevent all suspicion of falsehood in the minds of the Gentiles, if they were produced of a sudden after the birth of the Messiah, but also to instruct the Heathens by little and little of the right which all nations had, as well as the Jews, to that promise; that they might take their share in it, whenever they should be invited to it by God; and especially to take away the scandal which was to follow upon God's destroying the form of that commonwealth by the Romans, according to Daniel's prediction.

All these things, no doubt, engaged the Jews, who read the books of Moses, to make particular remarks upon them.

But they ought to have observed three things especially: the first was, that although God had at first chosen their whole nation, yet he was pleased to disperse afterwards almost ten parts of thirteen; which plainly shewed that this choice which he had made, was only an economical choice, and for a particular design.

* Gen. ix.

The second is, that although he was very severe and punctual in exacting obedience to the ceremonial service, yet he had fixed the most part of their observances to certain places, to certain times, and to certain persons: it was easy to judge, that when God bounded them in this manner, it was only for an economical service, prescribed only upon a particular prospect, which was one day to have an end.

The third is, that experience convinced them that although God seemed to have fixed his service to the temple, yet he suffered the Chaldeans to destroy the first, and did not restore to the second the first marks of his presence, when it was rebuilt by the order of Cyrus.

From whence it was natural to conclude, that such a glory as retired by little and little from that place which God had chosen, was only designed to be there for a time, till God should extend his service, by calling all the world to his religion, and so making the whole universe his temple, as we see it done in our days, by the calling of the Gentiles to the religion of our Saviour.

REFLECTIONS

UPON THE

Books of the Holy Scripture,

TO ESTABLISH THE TRUTH

OF THE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

PART THIRD.

ON THE HISTORICAL AND PROPHETICAL BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

PREFACE.

In my Reflections upon the Book of Genesis, I have shewed the means God made use of to imprint the ideas of the Creation of the World, and the Promise of the Messiah, during that long tract of 2500 years, before the children of Israel departed out of *Egypt*, and before the history of it was penned by Moses.

They that consider that God at first prescribed the law of the Sabbath, to fix the belief of the creation of the world, and that this law hath been constantly observed since the beginning of the world until Moses, and is still to this day observed amongst the Jews, easily apprehend, that this fact of the creation could not be more incontestably proved, or more firmly grounded.

In like manner an attentive reflection upon the Oracles which I have mentioned, and which alone at first were the foundation and hope of the religion of the Patriarchs, and were afterwards recorded in the book of Genesis, is sufficient to persuade any one that it was impossible but the memory of the Promise of the Messiah should be deeply engraved in the minds of the Israelites, though we should suppose that the spirit of jealousy which God had raised amongst the several pretenders to the execution

of that great Promise, did not much contribute to preserve the remembrance of it; as I have shewn very carefully, that it was very useful for that purpose.

I have in my Reflections afterwards proved, upon the four last Books of Moses, that God prosecuted the same design in the laws which he gave to the people of Israel, as well as in the peculiar forms and regulations of their government and religion; the great design of which rules, was only that the Messiah, at his appearance in the world, might be unquestionably known.

Whoever shall read the Reflections which I have made upon this matter, will easily perceive, that the long life of the Patriarchs was of great efficacy, to make so fresh and lively an impression of those illustrious facts, the Creation of the World, and the Promise of the Messiah, that there was no need of very frequent Oracles to confirm the same; as indeed we find that, in the space of 2553 years, only five or six principal Oracles were given, which have a particular relation to the Messiah, as I shall shew afterwards.

Now this reflection being once supposed, as the life of man was afterwards considerably shortened at the time of Moses, so one may judge that this promise ought to be more frequently proposed, and more clearly explained. And we ought to suppose that in proportion to the delaying of the Promise and the shortness of men's lives, which discouraged their hopes of ever seeing a Promise fulfilled, which their ancestors, whose lives were much longer, could never attain to the more distinct knowledge which God gave of this great object, was in order to stir up strong desires in the minds of the Israelites, as well as of the Gentiles, to whom God was afterwards to renew the ideas of it: and consequently we find that a greater number of Oracles and Prophecies were required, from time to time, to entertain and streng-

then the belief of a Promise, the accomplishment whereof was so considerably deferred.

And indeed this was exactly the method which God followed, the spirit of Prophecy having in a most illustrious manner been employed to preserve the ideas of the Promise of the Messiah, and to increase them in the minds of the Jews, until the time of the accomplishment itself; and God hath so exactly set down by the Prophets, the several parts of his design, as there needs not be afterwards any difficulty in discerning the prosecution of that design which he had formed at first.

I intend, in this third part of my Reflections on the Writings of the Old Testament, to explain this method which God hath followed, in shewing how he hath accommodated himself to the state of the Jews, whom he had made the depositaries of his Oracles, and proportioned them to their understanding and desires.

For the more happy execution of this design, and a clearer discovery of this conduct of God, which seems somewhat obscured, by intermixing these predictions concerning the Messiah, with a great number of events, during that series of ages whereof we have the history written by his own order, I think myself obliged first of all to explain the reasons why God was pleased to interweave the Oracles which relate to the Messiah, with other matters that seem to be of a very different nature; and then shall lay down the rules which one ought to follow, in applying the ancient Prophecies to the Messiah.

After these preliminary Reflections, I suppose, that in order to a fuller discovery of the series of God's design, and a more distinct knowledge of the progress of the revelation of this matter, that I ought again to resume, and to set before the eyes of the reader, the five or six principal Oracles which God hath given concerning the Messiah, from the beginning of the world to Moses, together with that

Oracle which he uttered by the mouth of that illustrious legislator.

One will easily judge, without my undertaking to prove it, that the ideas of these Oracles were familiar to the Jews until David, during the space of 400 years; after which, God began to discover the same more particularly, in choosing David to be the person in whose family that Prophecy should be accomplished, because the Messiah was to be born of his seed.

And so I shall immediately pass on to the consideration of those Oracles which David himself uttered on this subject, which deserve so much the more attention, because God, who at that time changed the government of the Jews, did considerably augment the ideas which the ancients had concerning the Promise of the Messiah.

Lastly, I shall collect under certain heads those Oracles which were uttered by the Prophets concerning the Messiah, some hundreds of years before the captivity of the Jews in *Babylon*, and soon after; and forasmuch as the light concerning this matter was at that time much increased, and the Oracles themselves are much more clear and distinct, as giving many more particular characters of the Messiah, so I shall content myself briefly to touch upon them, in following the principal characters which they give concerning the Messiah.

After which, I shall have nothing else to do, but to make some reflections upon the state of the Jews, from the time of the last of the Prophets, until that wherein the Christians pretend that this Promise and these Oracles were accomplished in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Though the multiplicity of the things which I am to handle, and which I intend to do with the greatest briefness that is possible, might seem to oblige me to omit the examining the succession of the history of the Jews, yet God having been pleased to intermix

the history of the Jews, and many other transactions, with these Prophecies, it obligeth me in this third part to make also some Reflections upon the Historical Books of the Old Testament. And indeed this will be of great use to prove the truth of these Oracles, and the manner how God hath constantly followed that draft which he at first formed to himself; as also to make it appear, that notwithstanding the different revolutions of the Jewish commonwealth, he hath always continued those means which he chose at first, to facilitate the distinct knowledge of the Messiah, whenever he should appear.

It is very necessary to explain this series of the design of God, to make the authority of these Prophecies more firm and unmoveable; those laws, the observation of which serve to distinguish the family of Judah, and that of the Messiah, being so many boundaries and limits, within which God was pleased to confine himself, that his conduct in this matter might be the more easily observable and known.

And forasmuch as, in my Reflections upon the Books of Moses, I have begun by the firm establishment of the truth of those Books on which I made my reflections, without which that work would have wanted all its strength, so I intend also in this part to follow the same rule; and accordingly I shall at first establish the truth of the Historical and Prophetical Books of the Old Testament: for if one ought to prove that these Prophecies were well known and very famous, then it will be expected from me that I should solidly demonstrate the truth of those Books in which those Oracles are recorded, before I can of right conclude that the facts which are related by other authors are the accomplishment of these Prophecies.

This design would naturally engage me to prove the truth of every one of these Books, in order, particularly: but as I have not only proved the truth of the Books of Moses already, but that moreover I in-

tend, in my Reflections on the Books of the New Testament, to demonstrate the truth of them beyond all contest; and besides, that the Historical and Prophetical Books of the Old Testament are so essentially linked with those of Moses, and the Disciples of Jesus Christ, that it is impossible to acknowledge the truth of the one, without owning at the same time the truth of the others; I believe I may be dispensed with as to the proving the truth of every Book of the Old Testament in particular: and therefore, because I intend to be very short, I will confine myself to some general Reflections upon those Books of the Old Testament which were writ since Moses, but such as, I hope, will be sufficient to satisfy an equitable and intelligent Reader.

REFLECTIONS,

&c. &c.

PART THIRD.

ON THE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

CHAP. I.

That there is, in the Historical Writings of the Old Testament, an uninterrupted Series of Events, which have a natural and necessary Dependance for more than Ten Ages.

THE first general proof which I make use of to establish the truth of the Historical Books of the Old Testament after Moses, may be lawfully drawn from the uninterrupted series of events which are related by those authors who have written the History of the State and church of Israel.

We may observe several considerable *epochas* of this history, which takes in about one thousand and forty years.

The first part takes in all that happened after Moses till the establishment of the kingdom, which is related in the books of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, and the first book of Samuel.

The second contains the history of the kings of

Judah and *Israel*, till the destruction of *Samaria* and *Jerusalem*.

The third contains an account of what passed during the Jewish captivity, and after their re-establishment.

Now, there is not one of these books which concern the history of this people, in one or other of these *epochas*, which has not certain characters of the truth of its relations, by the necessary connection which it has, either with those events which went before it, or with those which followed it, and this by a natural and immediate dependance. This ought to be confirmed by some observations.

The book of Joshua, which contains the conquest and division of the land of *Canaan*, is the execution of Moses's design, who brought the people of Israel out of *Egypt*, to go and make themselves masters of a country which the Jews pretend that God promised to Abraham. The division of this land amongst the tribes, is the title which each tribe had to its possessions in it; and this division subsisted a great while very distinct, and well known by the several tribes of this people. There happened no considerable change, but only when the kings of *Assyria* carried the ten tribes into captivity, after the taking of *Samaria*, in the three thousand two hundred and eighty-third year of the world; the country continuing in the same state, under the two remaining tribes, without any change ensuing upon their transportation into *Babylon*, as I have observed in the nineteenth chapter of my Reflections upon Exodus, and the following books.

This book has a very natural influence upon the following books, as is manifest from the history of the alliance which the Gibeonites got from the Jews by surprise. It serves for a foundation to all that happened for four hundred and thirty years after, in David's reign, under whom the

commonwealth, being already changed into a monarchial government, had in all appearance undergone a great alteration.

The book of Judges has an essential relation to the books of Moses and Joshua, the most part of the captivities of the people of Israel being a consequence of their quarrels with the nations which they had subdued, or with their neighbours, as the Moabites and Ammonites descended from Lot, who were jealous of this people that was descended from Abraham.

There we may see, for instance, the Israelites upon the defensive part, because God forbad them to set upon the Moabites and the Ammonites; whereas these last pretended that Israel had usurped some part of their country.

It must be granted, that there is nothing so remarkable as the actions of these judges, whom God raised up to deliver his people from those different captivities through which they passed for three hundred and fifty-six years together. But we may find the memory of some of them preserved by those public hymns which were famous throughout the nation, and by those illustrious monuments of their judicial authority which were preserved amongst them, and which kept up a remembrance of them amongst the Israelites and the neighbouring nations.

For this ought to be observed with care, that since the Jews could not invent any thing upon this head, which would not be well known by all the neighbouring nations, as the Tyrians, who kept up their own government till Alexander's time, who subdued them entirely, and the Moabites, whose empire continued for fourteen ages after Lot's time, until the destruction of *Jerusalem* by Nebuchadnezzar, it was not easy for any fabulous relations in this matter to obtain authority.

The book of Ruth seems not to have any thing considerable, but the conversion of Ruth, a Moabitess, who relied upon the hopes of the house of Judah, out of which she had married her husband. But we may take notice of three things besides: 1. Of the exact practice of that law which obliged them to marry the widow of a relation who died without issue; 2. Of their lively remembrance of the deeds of their ancestors, as of Judah's incest with Thamar, which was looked upon however as a fountain and a pattern of blessings; 3. Of the lineage of David whom this author represents as deriving his pedigree from a Moabitess, which not making much for the honour of a king of *Israel*, does at the same time confirm the truth of the relations which are contained in that book.

The first book of Samuel contains the history of Eli's and Samuel's judicatures, of the change of the government from a commonwealth to a monarchy under Saul, of David's anointing, Saul's rejection and death.

The second contains the history of David, his victories, his design of building a temple, a design which God left to Solomon to execute, his wars with the Ammonites, his crime with Bathsheba, his son Absalom's insurrection against him, and his great successes against his enemies. There is nothing in these two books, which has not an exact connection with what went before, and what follows. One sees throughout, an exact relation to the law of Moses; one sees throughout, monuments set up in several places, to preserve the memory of particular actions; one sees also, in the wars of the Israelites with their neighbours, a constant series of those old differences which were the fruits of the jealousy of these nations against the children of Israel.

The books of the Kings, which the Jews reckoned but as one book, contain an abridgment of Solo-

mon's establishment in the place of David, of the glory of his empire, which was carried by David to the banks of Euphrates, according to the ancient prophecies; of his marriage with the king of Egypt's daughter; of the building of the temple, and his own palace, with the help of Hiram, king of *Tyre:* one sees the manner of the queen of Sheba's visit to Solomon, of his alliances with the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Edomites, the Zidonians, and the Hittites; thinking by these marriages to have put an end to the old quarrels between his people and these nations, who were jealous of the people Israel. All this was done in the forty years of Solomon's reign; and as there never was so famous a reign in *Judea*, so never was there any, of which there are left so many monuments, as well there, as in the neighbouring countries.

One sees afterwards, in the same book, the division of Solomon's empire into two governments, that of Judah, which continued from Solomon's death, during the reign of eighteen successors, for three hundred eighty-six years, to the taking of *Jerusalem* by Nebuchadnezzar; and that of Israel formed by Jeroboam, which lasted two hundred fifty-four years, under the reign of nineteen successors, until the taking of Samaria, the capital city of the kingdom of Israel.

The history of the Chronicles, which was written about twenty-six years after that of the Kings, carries the history down to Cyrus, the founder of the empire of *Persia*, who gave the Jews their liberty again. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah contain the history of what passed under his successors, to the time of Artaxerxes, for almost eighty-two years.

It was in this interval that the deliverance happened which the Jews received under Esther, wife to one of the most powerful kings of *Persia*, the memory of which the Jews celebrate every year in all places, the thirteenth and fourteenth days of the

month Adar, (which answers to our February) by virtue of Esther's law.

After these general remarks, with which I shall content myself at present, I ought to make some reflections, which cannot be omitted without taking away a great deal of force from those proofs which establish the truth of this matter.

The first is, that as these histories have a necessary relation to the laws of Moses, so they could not have been neglected by a people who, in their religious and civil conduct, were absolutely regulated by those very laws.

The second is, that all the actions related in this history, have passed altogether in the bosom of a people, the extent of whose country is not twenty leagues in breadth, nor eighty in length.

The third is, that this people having observed the law of the seventh year, and of the first year, or year of jubilee, (which law you have in the twenty-fifth of Leviticus) from their first conquest and division of the country, forty-seven years after their coming out of *Egypt*, this observation has served for a double cycle, to fix the remembrance of those actions, and to make it pass from one generation to another. And so the greatness of that promise which God made to Hezekiah, (Esai. xxxvii. 30. and 2 Kings, xix. 29.) may easily be understood; and although Sennacherib's invasion would, in all probability, lay waste all *Judea*, yet they might eat the fruits of the earth in quietness, the fourteenth year of Hezekiah, and the next year they should eat the fruits that would grow up of themselves without tillage, and that on the sixteenth year they should have liberty to till the ground, as formerly; which shews, without any force upon the words, that the fifteenth year of Hezekiah's reign was the sabbatical year, in which the Jews were forbidden to cultivate the ground.

The fourth is, that it appears in effect, by the series of this whole story, that things were written so as to agree with the public records which were extant amongst the people: this is manifest, if we consider how often the sacred penmen refer us to the histories and annals of those kings of whom they speak, and of whom they only quote the principal stories, in short, in pursuing their design, which was entirely to bring an account of the state of the religion and the government of the Jews and Israelites, under one view,

Let us go on to other proofs to establish this truth.

CHAP. II.

That there is a strict Connection between the Sacred History, and the oldest Monuments which we have of Profane History.

As there were but few very ancient writers of Profane History, and as we have but small fragments of them dispersed here and there, preserved for the most part by the care of Josephus the Jewish historian, and of Eusebius in his books *De Præparatione Evangelica*, so we ought not to be surprised, if but few of the more illustrious passages and events of the Jewish history be taken notice of by Pagan writers. The people of Israel being otherwise engaged, by the observation of the Mosaic law, to keep close to that country where it was established; this made their neighbours have less knowledge of their history.

However, there is enough left to shew with how great fidelity and exactness the sacred writers penned the history of their own nation: in short, we may find amongst the Heathen historians and poets (who

were their first historians), several relations which shew that the matters of fact related by the sacred writers, were well enough known to them, and in the same manner that they are related in those historical books which were written after Moses.

The memory of Joshua and his conquests was famous amongst the Heathens: there are ancient monuments extant which prove that the Carthaginians were a colony of the Tyrians, who escaped from Joshua; as also that the inhabitants of *Leptis* in *Africa* came originally from the Zidonians, who forsook their country, because of the miseries which afflicted it.

The fable of the Phœnician Hercules arose from the history of Joshua*; the overthrow of the giants, and the famous Typhon, owe their original to the overthrow of Og the king of Bashan, and of the Anakins, who were called giants.†

The tempest of hail spoken of in the eleventh of Joshua, was transformed by the poets into a tempest of stones, with which, as they say, Jupiter overwhelmed the enemies of Hercules in *Arim*, which is exactly the country where Joshua fought with the children of Anak.

One finds the memorial of the actions of Gideon preserved by Sanchoniathon, a Tyrian writer, who lived soon after him, and whose antiquity is attested by Porphyry.

One finds, in the manner of Jephtha's sacrificing his daughter after his victory over the Ammonites, the original of the sacrificing of Iphigenia; it being usual with the Heathens, as Ælian judiciously observes,§ to attribute to their later heroes the glory of the actions of those who lived long before.

We have an account of a feast which was observ-

* Procop. Vandalicorum, lib. ii. c. 10.

† Polybius, Frag. cxiv. Sallust. de Bello Jugurthino.

§ Variæ Historiæ, lib. v. cap. 3.

ed by the Heathen Romans in April, the time of the Jewish harvest, in which they let loose foxes with torches fastened to their tails, which certainly came from the story of Sampson, and was brought into *Italy* by the Phœnicians.*

One finds, in the same history of Sampson and Delilah, the original of the story of Nisus and his daughter, who cut off those fatal hairs upon which the victory depended.†

Nicholas Damascenus has preserved the account of the victory which David obtained over the Syrians of *Zoba*, upon the banks of the *Euphrates*, as it is described by the sacred writers.§

There are monuments extant which describe the part which Hiram king of *Tyre* had in the building of the temple of Solomon, almost the same with the account which the sacred authors give us of his part in the erection of that great work.

One finds in Herodotus an account of the taking of *Jerusalem* by Sesostris, king of *Egypt*, as it is described in the history of Rehoboam.‡

One finds the history of the kings of *Syria* related by Nicolaus Damascenus in the same manner as it is described by the sacred writers, when they give us an account of the victories which the kings of *Syria* obtained over the kings of *Samaria*.

One finds that the story of Phaëton is solely founded upon the translation of Elijah in a chariot of fire.‖

All that I have taken notice of, happened before the time of the first Olympiad, from whence the learned Varro has observed that the first knowledge of history began amongst the Greeks; whence also

* Ovid. Fastorum lib. iv.
† Ovid. Metam. lib. viii. fab. i.
§ Joseph. Antiq. lib. vii. cap. 6.
‡ Joseph. Antiq. lib. vii. cap. 6.
‖ 2 Kings, ii.

it is that they call all the precedent time fabulous, the Greeks having before nothing but fables, into which they had turned whatever ancient history they were acquainted with.

Since that time, we do not find fewer marks of the truth of the sacred histories.

One sees in the Pagan writers the reign of Tiglah-Pileser, who is the same with the younger Ninus; as also the destruction of the Syrian monarchy by his means, as it is described to us in the sacred historians. Nicholas Damascenus in Josephus, Antiq. lib. vii. cap. 6.

One sees amongst the Heathens, the succession of Shalmaneser as it is described in the Scriptures.*

One sees the manner of Sennacherib's conquering the most part of the towns of *Palestina*, of *Tyre* and *Sidon*, described in Heathen writers, particularly as we have it in the Scriptures.†

The manner of Sennacherib's succesion to Shalmaneser, of his desolating the country of *Palestine* while he carried on his victories, is described by the Heathens, Herodot. lib. ii. & Berosus in Josephus, lib. x. c. 1. exactly as the sacred historians relate it.

The memory of Tirhakah king of Æthiopia, as of a great conqueror, is preserved amongst the Heathens;§ for it was his coming, in short, which obliged Sennacherib to arise from before *Libna*, whence he intended to go and besiege *Jerusalem*.

One finds amongst the Heathens the remembrance of the manner of the destruction of all Sennacherib's army, for his blasphemies against God, which the Egyptians disguised, to appropriate to themselves. Herodot. lib. ii. cap. 141.

One finds the ruin of *Ashdod* by king Psammeti-

* Castor in Euseb.
† Meander apud Joseph. lib. ix. cap. ult.
§ Strabo, lib. i. & xv.

chus described by Heathen authors, as we have it in the sacred Scriptures. Herod. lib. ii.*

One finds an account of the ways by which the Medes lost the empire of *Asia* under Cyaxares, after his conquests over the Assyrians, in the Heathen writers, much the same as it is described in Nahum. ii. 5.

The account of the taking of *Nineve* by Nabopolasser, and by Astyages, is much the same in Heathen authors† with the description of it in Nahum, Esaiah, and Ezekiel.

The manner of Josiah's undertaking a war against Pharaoh-Necho, king of *Egypt*, when he was overthrown in the plains of *Megiddo*, as it is described by the Heathens,§ agrees with the relation which are given of it in the holy Scriptures.

The victories of Nebuchadnezzar over the Egyptians and the Jews, the carrying away of the consecrated vessels of the temple, and of the Jews to *Babylon*,‡ are described by the Heathens.

The manner of the yielding up of *Tyre* to Nebuchadnezzar, as they describe it,‖ agrees with what Ezekiel says, chap. xxviii. 18, 19.

One finds in Heathen authors an account of the stately building of *Babylon* by Nebuchadnezzar,** which is described exactly in the Scriptures.

One finds also in them,†† that the death of Pharaoh-Hoptha or Vaphres, as they call him, happened according to Jeremiah's predictions, chap. xl. 30.

One finds also the taking of *Babylon* by Cyrus,§§ as it is described by the Prophet Jeremiah, chap. li. 46.

* Herodot. lib. i. cap. 104. lib. ii. cap. 1. lib. vii. cap. 10.
† Alexand. Polyhistor. ap. Syncellum. § Herodot. lib. ii.
‡ 2 Kings, xxiii. 29, 30.
‖ Annal. Phœnic. ap. Joseph. lib. i. contra. Apionem.
** Beros. Abyden. †† Herodot. lib. ii. cap. 163. & 169.
§§ Herodot. lib. i. cap. 178.

One finds also that the death of Belshazzar* happened exactly as Daniel had described it, chap. v.

One sees there an account of Xerxes's great undertaking against *Greece*,† as Daniel had foretold it, chap. xi.

Here then is an agreement which is perfect enough in several articles, to which we might add a greater number, if we had a greater number of Pagan historians: but as we cannot find, after the reign of Artaxerxes Longiamus, histories amongst the Jews of equal authority with those which were written by and after Moses, as Josephus the Jewish historian observes, so we cannot compare the Jewish and Pagan histories together afterwards, in that form we have done hitherto.

But it is easy to observe four things, which are very considerable, upon this head.

I. That the credit of the sacred historians may be grounded upon the great number of remarks we have made already, or else nothing will ever establish it. For how can we conceive that all sorts of historians, of all nations and all ages, Babylonians, Assyrians, Tyrians, Egyptians, and Greeks, could agree so exactly with the Jews, in those facts they relate, if the Jewish authors had not exactly followed the rules of truth.

II. That as the prophecies of Zechariah and Daniel describe, with an almost incredible exactness, the considerable events which happened in the countries near to *Judea*, and in *Judea* itself, in a time which was not expired until the sacred writers had given over writing amongst the Jews, so there was need of almost nothing else, but to look over the books of Daniel, to see what happened from day to day. And here we may observe, that the reason why Porphyry thought the book of Daniel was forged

* Xenophon. Histor. lib. vii.
† Herod. lib. vii. cap. 5, 6.

after the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, was, because this book seemed to him to be rather a history than a prediction; which he justified, in making a sort of commentary upon this prophecy, by comparing with it the Pagan historians which were then extant.

III. That as the Jewish commonwealth came under the power of the Greeks who were masters of learning, and of the art of writing histories, so there is little need of any other witnesses besides the Greek authors, as Josephus demonstrates, in effect, by proving that the Greeks were well enough acquainted with the affairs of the Jewish nation.

IV. That we do really find, after the time of Artaxerxes, a very great part of the Jewish history composed by the care of some particular men, with sufficient exactness, though it be not of equal authority with the sacred writers.

CHAP. III.

That there is an uninterrupted Series of Events foretold by the sacred Oracles, of which we may see a very great Number accomplished in every Age.

As we may very reasonably say, that all the history of the people of Israel has a very exact dependance upon the writings of that famous legislator; so we may also observe, that there are scarce any considerable events which make up the body of this history, which do not deserve a particular remark, either as a fulfilling of Moses's prophecies, or of those other Prophets whom God raised up after him to reform the errors of that nation. And it is a very considerable thing, that in all the series of events foretold by the Prophets, there was not one generation amongst all the offspring of the people, but what

saw the accomplishment of several of these oracles. A little attention and care in comparing the chronology of the oracles with that of the events, will sufficiently justify what I say. I shall content myself with observing their different orders, which will satisfy a judicious reader, since my design does not engage me necessarily to do a thing which would carry me too far, and which may be done with little application.

We may consider four sorts of oracles: 1. Those which have respect to particular facts nigh at hand; 2. Those which have respect to particular facts, but at a greater distance; 3. Those which have respect to facts which belong to the whole Jewish nation; 4. Those which have respect to facts which belong to foreign nations, either bordering upon *Palestina*, or further from it. Now there is nothing so exactly fulfilled, as these four sorts of oracles.

You have, for particular facts, which were nigh at hand, and foretold by the Prophets, the oracle of Moses concerning the advancement of Joshua, and the conquest of *Palestine*, which happened soon after.

You have Deborah's oracle of the victory promised to Barak.

You have Samuel's oracle of the advancement and rejection of Saul.

You have an oracle of the same Samuel, of the advancement of David.

You have Nathan's oracle concerning Absalom's revolt.

You have Abijah's oracle concerning the advancement of Jeroboam, and the division of Solomon's kingdom into ten tribes, and into two tribes, whereof the lesser part was to continue in the possession of Solomon's heirs.

You have Abijah's prediction of the death of Jeroboam's son.

You have a prediction of the advancement of Jehu in the place of Jehoram king of *Israel*.

You have Elijah's prediction of the exemplary punishment of Ahab and Jezabel.

You have the prediction of Jehoiakim's death made by Jeremiah, chap. xxii. 18, 19.; and xxxvi. 30. which happened ten years after.

You have the prediction of Jechoniah's miseries made by Jeremiah, chap. xxii. 3.

You have Jeremiah's prediction of the death of the false Prophet Ananiah, but seven months before it happened.

You have an express designation of Zorobabel to conclude the rebuilding of the temple, made by Zechariah, chap. iv. 9. and which was completed in four years.

It is therefore fully evident, that the prediction of particular facts, which were to happen in a very short time, served to establish the authority of the Prophets. And in effect one sees that they proceeded upon the authority which those predictions of nearer events gave them, to foretell other particular events at a greater distance.

So you see that Moses foretold after a sort, after Jacob, the manner how the land of *Canaan* was to be divided, though the thing was to be done by lot.

You see the same Moses foretelling the several captivities which the people of Israel suffered after the conquest, and the method of God's raising up several judges, to the number of fourteen, to bring them out of those calamities.

You see the same Moses foretelling that the temple should be built in the tribe of Benjamin, though it was the least.

You have Joshua's prediction of the way how the rebuilder of *Jericho* should be exemplarily punished; which was accomplished in Ahab's time, (1 Kings, xvi. 34.) about 570 years after this prophetical imprecation of Joshua.

You have the prediction of a Prophet, who was contemporary to Jeroboam, about the birth of Josiah,

which was not till 350 years after, (1 Kings, xiii.) and of the manner of his destroying the altar which Jeroboam built.

One sees a prediction of the overthrow of the kingdom of *Samaria*, within 65 years, by Isaiah, in the reign of Jotham.

One sees the destruction of *Jerusalem* by Nebuchadnezzar, foretold by several of the Prophets.

One sees the taking of *Tyre* by Nebuchadnezzar, foretold by Isaiah, chap. xxiii. 15, 17.

One sees the promise of its re-establishment, seventy years after its destruction.

One sees the promise of Cyrus's birth made by Isaiah, chap. xliv. 45. as of one that should restore liberty to the Jews, and give them opportunities of rebuilding their temple at *Jerusalem*.

One sees the prediction of the manner how Antiochus Epiphanes would treat the Jews in his lifetime, and how he should be punished for his cruelties and sacrileges.

One sees the prediction of the courage of the Maccabees, who should oppose the tyranny of that prince, and purify anew the Divine worship.

So that it is plain, that the foretelling of these particular facts, which were at so great a distance, revived the memory of these Prophets amongst the Jews in every age, and made them read them with a singular attention.

One ought also to make the same reflection upon those oracles which have respect to the particular events of the state of the Jews, and its continuance until the time of the Messiah, after which the Prophets foretel its ruin and destruction without remedy.

In short, one may say, that there was no revolution, never so little considerable, of which we do not find very many and very particular predictions foretold by several Prophets, upon very different occasions, and particular circumstances.

One sees in the books of Moses exact descriptions of the pilgrimages of Abraham's posterity, of their continuance in *Egypt*, of the oppression they were there to undergo, of their prodigious increase, of their robbing the Egyptians at their departure, of their methods in conquering the land of *Canaan*, of the way how kings should arise from Abraham; which was accomplished in the Ishmaelites and Edomites, and at last in the Israelites.

One sees express predictions of the several judges whom God should raise up to the people of Israel.

One sees an express prediction of the advancement of the tribe of Judah to the kingdom.

One sees a prediction of the future subjection of the Edomites to the power of the kings of *Judah*, and of their conquering of the countries which lie along the banks of *Euphrates*, which was fulfilled in David's time.

One sees an express division of that kingdom into two very unequal parts.

One sees great numbers of predictions concerning the state of the kings of *Judah* and *Israel:* for instance, you have an oracle concerning the destruction of Jehu's family in the fourth generation.*

The destruction of the kingdom of the ten tribes is expressly foretold, and the term is very exactly set down.

The ruin of *Jerusalem*, and of its kings, is also expressly foretold.

The time of the captivity of the Jews in *Babylon*, and

Their re-establishment by Cyrus after seventy years, are also very distinctly foretold.

The desolation of *Judea* under the empire of Alexander's successors, is foretold very exactly.

Their re-establishment after these desolations, and the way by which they were to be defended by the

* 2 Kings, x. 30.

Maccabees, who should become their kings, is likewise foretold.

In short, one sees express predictions of the ruin of *Jerusalem*, and of the whole nation under the Roman empire, after the coming of the Messiah.

As the people of Israel had always great quarrels with the neighbouring nations, so one finds that amongst the oracles which particularly regard the state of the Jews, the Prophets have interwoven a great number which concern those strange people, with relation to those differences which were kept up between the people of Israel and them.

So one sees the Egyptians and the Canaanites punished, in the execution of the oracles pronounced against the descendants of Cham.

One sees the prediction of the ruin of Benhadad, king of *Syria*, and of his house, foretold to the tenth generation.

One sees the prediction of the ruin of *Egypt* and *Tyre*, which happened under Nebuchadnezzar.

One sees the prediction of the ruin of the Moabites, which was under the same Nebuchadnezzar, after that kingdom had subsisted almost fourteen ages from its first foundation.

One sees frequent oracles concerning the ruin of *Nineveh*, and its empire.

One sees oracles concerning the ruin of *Babylon*, which happened under Cyrus.

One sees oracles of the destruction of the Persian empire by Alexander.

One sees oracles concerning the manner of this prince's conquering the greatest part of the world, and of his leaving his empire divided into four kingdoms.

One sees frequent oracles concerning the state of the empire of the Seleucidæ, and the Ptolemees, who had particular quarrels with the Jewish commonwealth.

One sees the alliances which were to be between the two kingdoms foretold, and the small success which should arise thence in terminating their differences.

One sees predictions of the treatment which the Jews should meet with in those kingdoms.

One sees a prediction of the retreat which *Egypt* was to give to the Jews, and of the temple they were to build there.

One sees an exact prediction of the manner of the profanation of the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes, for three years together.

One sees the prediction of the ruin of these two governments by the arms of the Roman empire.

It is very natural to make some reflections upon such a various multitude of oracles.

I. That there are no books in the world which are formed like those which we find in the hands of the Jews.

One finds there a history exactly pursued, and in a natural dependance, from the beginning of the world, for 3500 years.

One finds there a series of oracles which foretell all sorts of events, so inseparably united with the history, that it is impossible to find by what means the prophecies could have been so brought to support the history, and the history to support the authority of the prophecies.

One finds oracles so clear, and so particular, especially in the book of Daniel, that Porphyry, a mortal enemy to the Christians, was forced to assert, that the book of Daniel was forged after Antiochus Epiphanes's time: a ridiculous imagination! for this prophecy was translated into Greek more than one hundred years before, and was in the hands, not only of the Jews, but of the Egyptians also, mortal enemies to the whole Jewish nation.

This also is very surprising, that since the Jews, after their dispersion, preserve these histories, wherever they are, as the accomplishments of the oracles, and these oracles as predictions of those events of which their history is very full, they should never think of proposing to us any books of a like nature, considering that now, for one and twenty ages, they have had no parallel authors, who have both writ history, and pronounced oracles.

II. But, as these reflections lead us on to others, so we ought to enter upon them, by considering what the most unreasonable obstinacy can oppose to the authority of the Historical and Prophetical Books of Scripture.

CHAP. IV.

That how common soever Oracles may have been amongst the Pagans, yet nothing amongst them can justly be compared with those which are found amongst the Jews.

ONE of the greatest objections which can in all probability be made against this surprising series of Oracles, which are found in the books of the Old Testament, is taken from that great number of Oracles which are found amongst the Pagans. This objection deserves to be considered, because it will more clearly demonstrate the authority of the Prophetical books which are in the hands of the Jews.

I confess there have been false prophets: and indeed, since God has given us marks to distinguish them from true ones, which may be seen in the books of Moses, it cannot be denied but there have been some false prophets; and that, moreover, the history of the Prophets discovering to us impostors frequently, we may freely acknowledge, that amongst the

Pagans, and the people bordering upon *Judea*, there have been men who have boasted of predictions of things to come, as well as amongst the Jews.

I confess also, that some Heathen writers speak of certain oracles, which in all appearance are very well circumstantiated, and of which they relate a very exact accomplishment.

But several things ought to be observed upon this argument, which deserve an attentive consideration.

I. We see that their most celebrated things have been only an imitation of what was done amongst the Jews. The Egyptians imitated the Urim and the Thummim of the Jewish high priest; and they appropriated to him the right of giving oracles: and so we see they are given by a voice from heaven, which the Jews saw was granted to their Prophets. We may see it in the history of Socrates's life, and in Apuleius, p. 339.

II. We see that the same Pagan historians take notice that very many, even the greatest part of their oracles, were very ambiguous and false. The philosophers, and Tully particularly, openly laughed at them *(Lib.* 1, 2, *de Divinatione)*. They thought it a ridiculous thing, that Apollo Delphicus, the god of poetry, should give his answers in very bad verse, and at last be reduced to prose. Eusebius quotes a discourse of Oenomaus, a Greek philosopher, who wrote against oracles, to decry them as impostures.

III. We see that those oracles which had acquired the greatest reputation by their accomplishment, were borrowed from the Prophets of the synagogues. We have an illustrious example in the birth of Cyrus, which the Prophet Isaiah had foretold, about the year of the world 3292, and concerning which they pretend to shew prhphecies of Nebuchadnezzar and Crœsus, about the year 3492;* which shews, that

* Abydenus. Herodot. lib. i. cap. 55. & 91.

if the thing was really known to them, they could not have known it but by the prophetical writings which were amongst the Jews, and which could not have been concealed from them, because the Jews read them with care, to comfort themselves under that captivity to which they were reduced by Nebuchadnezzar.

IV. It is in effect proved by examining their oracles, most of which were either false or forged. This Eusebius has clearly proved, [*de Præpar. Evangelica, lib.* ix. *cap.* 5.] The proverb of the Sybil's or Delphic priestess's favouring of Philip, is commonly known. It was easy for these Heathen princes to bias their people with such predictions. But what Eusebius says,* puts the thing beyond all question; for he expressly shews, that when the priests were put to the rack, they confessed the whole contrivance of those oracles, which they pronounced to abuse the credulity of the people.

V. We ought to observe, that we cannot find great numbers of oracles upon the same subject; whereas one sees that the Prophets followed (as it were) Moses's model of the state of the commonwealth of the Jews, and that they frequently concur in foretelling the same facts from one generation to another.

VI. We ought to remember that these oracles were not kept within the limits of one single state or nation.

VII. It may be said that they were not publicly known, having been only proposed in private places, before a very few, and, in short, that they were not actually known to the most part of the neighbouring people; whereas one sees that the Jewish Prophets gave their oracles in the most solemn assemblies; and when they were committed to writing, they were known to all those who had any commerce with that nation. So that Isaiah's prophecies were questionless

* *De Præparat. Evangel.* lib. iv. initio.

known to Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus, who looked upon himself as designed by God to restore their liberty to the Jews. We may make the same judgment of the book of Daniel, which was known to Alexander without all question, as one may collect from the favourable reception the Jews found from him.

VIII. We ought to observe, that these pretended oracles were given, for the most part, in favour of those princes who could satisfy the greediness of the priests. Whereas the Prophets among the Jews lived in the most disinterested manner in the world, and usually pronounced nothing but reproaches and menaces of cruel calamities to those princes who had the government in their hands. Their ministry consisted in a courageous opposition to the corruptions in their laws and their religion, and in censuring their princes and governors with a singular intrepidity; and, indeed, we see that most of them met with the punishment of their boldness, and made trial of the most cruel tortures.

IX. Last of all, we ought to take notice, that as the oracles which are mentioned in Heathen authors, were only of facts of small importance to those people amongst whom it is said that they were pronounced, so we do not find that they thought themselves much concerned in their preservation; whereas one sees that the Jewish nation were so persuaded of the truth of these oracles with which they were entrusted, that nothing to this very day could ever oblige them to discontinue the reading of them, whatever disputes they may otherwise have with the Christians, who make use of them to establish their pretensions, notwithstanding all the claims of the synagogue.

When this is laid down, it would seem as if I might reasonably conclude, that the wonderful variety of oracles which are to be found amongst the Jews, cannot be at all weakened by those oracles which we find so frequent mention in Pagan writers.

But we ought to go further, in explaining two things, which will perfectly clear this matter; one is, that the Historical and Prophetical Books of the Old Testament after Moses, can be no forgeries; the other is, that in truth, those Oracles which we find inserted in those books, could not possibly have been forged after their completion.

CHAP. V.

That the Books in which we may find these Oracles, were never forged.

I HAVE observed formerly, that it is absolutely necessary that the authority of those books in which these Oracles are inserted, be established, before we can build upon the authority of the Oracles. And, indeed, if we cannot clearly shew that these Books were written, and publicly known, before the things happened which are said to be accomplishments of those preceding Oracles, it would be natural to call in question the authority of these Oracles. But it is very easy to satisfy an equitable reader herein, and to establish in general, or severally, the existence of these prophetical writings, before the times in which those facts happened, which we propose as the accomplishment of those prophecies.

I shall make use of two sorts of reflections to establish my proposition. The first consists in general considerations upon the books themselves: the second has respect to particular facts, which are uncontested, and whence the same truth very naturally results.

I. We ought to observe, that whereas, in Genesis, Moses makes use of no other epocha to fix the time of any event, but the years of the life of some famous Patriarch: as, for instance, he fixes the flood to the

600th year of Noah's age; in Exodus and Numbers* he uses the time of their coming out of *Egypt* for his epocha; in the books of the following authors, the years from their departure out of *Egypt* were carefully set down till the fourth year of king Solomon's reign, which was 480 years after their departure. This was a character to fix the time of all those who lived after that epocha.

II. The building of the temple began a new epocha among the Jews, as appears from 2 Chron. viii. 1. though they began after that time to reckon by the years of the kings of *Judah* and *Israel*, as appears by the books of the first Prophets; which is a character sufficiently certain, to distinguish those who lived after Solomon, with the time when they lived.

III. It is plain that the Babylonish captivity, and afterwards their subjection to the Persian empire, obliged them to fix their events, and to date their prophecies, by the years of the governments of those foreign kings. [See Daniel, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and Haggai.] So the author of the book of Maccabees refers to the years of the Seleucidæ. Now, that we may the better perceive the force of this observation, we must remember three things. 1. That the authors who lived after the carrying away of the Jews into *Babylon*, make use of some Chaldee terms, which are not to be found in the foregoing prophets; for we may see in the books of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, the same style with Ezra, Nehemiah, and Daniel.† 2. The authors of these books give names to the months, which they had not before the captivity. The Jews only called their months, first, and second, &c. and so they gave names which were unheard of before.‡ 3. The authors of these prophecies take particular notice of any newly-instituted

* Exod. xix. Numb. xxxiii. 38.
† Ezek. xl. 1. Daniel x. Zech. i. Hagg. i.
‡ Talm. Rosch. Hassanah. c. i.

fasts; thus we see that the Prophet Haggai mentioned those fasts of which we have nothing in the law, but which were instituted during the captivity.

We must blind ourselves of purpose, to conceive that any impostor could forge books which have so exact a relation, and such certain characteristics, to fix them to the time in which every author lived, and to the circumstances wherein he wrote. We must of necessity grant, that, before such an impostor could bring about such a design, he must have made himself master of the whole profane history, to fix so exactly the history of the Jewish nation, and of those oracles which have been given in circumstances which are unintelligible without the help of profane histories of different nations.

I come now to facts which cannot be contested. It is sufficient that those facts be acknowledged as true, to establish in general the truth of those books whereof we teach.

I. It cannot be denied, that the Jews preserve these oracles to this day with great fidelity.

II. It cannot be denied, that they are in the hands of Christians, who preserve them, as well as the Jews, since they have been separated from them: that is, for almost seventeen ages.

III. It cannot be denied, that these prophecies have been exactly read by the Jews, because of those oracles upon which they believe, to this day, that the whole happiness of their nation is founded.

IV. It cannot be denied, that the Jews have read these books exactly, to refute the Disciples of Jesus Christ, who have pretended, from the first age of their appearing, that Jesus Christ is the Messiah marked out by these oracles. In short, whereas the Christians pretend to prove by the accomplishment of the ancient oracles, that Jesus Christ was the Messiah; it is known that the Jews endeavour to this day to wrest the sense of these oracles, and to shew that there are many things which are not literally

accomplishment, and which by consequence cannot be applied to Jesus Christ.

V. It cannot be denied, that most of the controversies of the Jews with the Christians, only regard the application of the text of the prophetical authors. The Christians explain them in a mystical sense; the Jews maintain that they ought to be explained literally.

VI. It cannot be denied that, about 300 years before the birth of our Saviour, the prophetical books were translated, and put into the hands of the Egyptians, having been carried to, and translated at *Alexandria*, by a public order of the whole nation, for the satisfaction of a king of *Egypt*. The history of that version which put those sacred books into the hands of the Greeks, and the Jews who dwelt in *Egypt*, is the most famous thing in the world, and which made those books perfectly known.

Here we have now these books in Hebrew, and in Greek; that is to say, in the primitive language of the Jews, and the vulgar language of the empire which Alexander founded.

It is known, that from that time the Christians took care to make great numbers of translations into all the vulgar tongues, after the preaching of the gospel; and that they preserved those ancient books as the first elements of their religion.

Now it will be sufficient to acknowledge those truths, to consider,

That those oracles were true which foretold things which happened almost four ages after their prediction. Thus, for instance, the destruction of *Jerusalem*, the overthrow of the Jewish state, the calling of the Gentiles, to the service of the God of Israel, the destruction of the Syrian and Egyptian monarchies, are all contained in the books of Daniel, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

Now there is not more difficulty to conceive that such authors as Isaiah, Amos, Joel, should have fore-

told the same thing eight or nine hundred years before, than there is to believe that they were foretold by those who lived but little above four ages before they actually came to pass. There is therefore no difficulty in conceiving that these ancient oracles were proposed as we see them, and in those times to which we find them fixed.

But we ought to go further into this matter, and to establish the same thing by the consideration of the things themselves.

I confess that we might have a suspicion of those oracles which are not related upon the faith of a public volume; as, for instance, those of Elijah, Elisha, and Uriah the son of Shemaiah, who seem never to have published any thing.

But here we are to observe, 1. That usually the authors who publish the oracles, are not the same with those who tell us of their accomplishment; 2. That the oracles of which we now speak were upon subjects perfectly known, and upon very illustrious exigencies. What more illustrious than the destruction of Ahab's family, foretold by Elijah? What more extraordinary than the manner of Jezabel's death, foretold by the same prophet?

In short, we ought to take notice, I. That these oracles were written for the most part in complete volumes: we have sixteen prophets sufficiently distinguished by their proper volumes.

II. Each of these authors has a very different character from the rest; so that some, as Daniel, for instance, write in a peculiar language, one part of his book being in Chaldee.

III. Every one has some relation to the rest; so those who lived together often treat of the same things: so Iaiah, for instance, Joel, Amos, Hosea. But they had separate ideas, and particular oracles, and a turn which perfectly distinguishes them one from another.

IV. One need only read their works, to find that they wrote in different places. Amos was of *Judah*, and went to prophecy in *Israel;* that appears plainly. Ezekiel and Daniel prophesied in *Chaldea;* that is seen by reading their works.

V. There is a natural dependance between the books of Moses and those of the prophets in general; for the prophets were continually reproaching the kings and people with the crimes which they committed against the law of God proposed by Moses.

VI. There is a natural dependance between the writings of the former and of the latter prophets. So Jeremiah is quoted by Daniel,* as foretelling the time when the desolations of *Jerusalem* were to have an end: this he proposes, not as if he had learnt it by a revelation, but as a thing which he had found out by an attentive examination of the prophecy of Jeremiah.

VII. There is an exact connection of these oracles with the history of the time, which is often interwoven with the prophecies. One sees it in the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel; the other historical books not being altogether so particular as these prophetical books are.

VIII. In short, one sees that these books are interwoven with oracles concerning ancient events, and people which have now no existence; so that hinders us from suspecting any forgery.

I shall not repeat the common arguments which establish the credit of these books; I brought in most of them, when I established the authority of the books of Moses. I shall only make some reflections here, to establish the same truth.

* Dan. ix. 2.

CHAP. VI.

That the Manner of writing the Prophetical Books of the Old Testament, shews that those Oracles could not have been forged after their Completion.

I HAVE several things to take notice of, to make this truth more sensible. The first is taken from the necessary connection of all the parts of the history of the Old Testament, the truth of which I have proved by several characters. This history is exactly written by several authors: now the history of the prophets, and of their oracles, is so exactly *framed* into the history, that it is impossible to take it out, without confounding the whole.

The books of Samuel, which were written by Samuel, by Nathan, and by Gad, as appears by 1 Chron. xxix. 29. contain the history from the year of the world 2888. to the year 2987.

The books of the Kings contain the history of the kings, and of the prophets, from the year 2989 to the year 3442.

The books of the Chronicles recapitulate the history, from the beginning of the world to the year 3468.

Ezra writ his history from the year 3468 to the year 3538.

Nehemiah continued it from the year 3550 to the year 3563.

Here is therefore, on the one side, an uninterrupted series of history; and on the other side, a continued succession of prophecies.

David, who began to reign in the year 2950, with several other prophets of that time, writ the most part of the Psalms, which are full of oracles, and

which were sung by the people, as a part of the divine service.

Isaiah began his prophecy in 3246, and died in the year 3306. Hosea, Micah, and Nahum, were contemporary with him.

Jeremiah began his prophecy in the year 3375, and lived at the same time with Zephaniah.

Daniel was carried into *Babylon* in 3401, and prophesied until 3470.

Ezekiel prophesied at *Babylon* in 3509.

Haggai and Zechariah prophesied in 3590, soon after Ezra, in the time of Nehemiah.

Malachi seems to have lived until the year 3589.

Can we therefore in the least imagine that a history should be so intermixed with prophecies and oracles, without conceiving at the same time the truth of both by an invincible necessity.

But we may make a second reflection hereupon.

There are three general characters which distinguish prophets very sensibly from the generality of authors.

I. They were public censors: let us but read the history of Isaiah's conduct, who called all the heads of the people, rulers of *Sodom;* or that of Jeremiah, chap. xxxvi, or of any other of the prophets in general.

II. They were comforters of the people, when they had brought them to repentance by their preaching. There are as many instances of this, as there are prophets.

III. They foretold remarkable occurrences, happy or unfortunate, long before there was any probability that they should happen.

It is impossible to consider these characters, without seeing that the state of affairs was that which gave a foundation for their sermons: so that one must of necessity have framed their history of new, to give ground for a forgery. This change in the style of the prophets, follows the circumstances of

the Jewish state exactly. All that Isaiah or Jeremiah say, will hold no longer than whilst you suppose the state of the Jews to be as corrupt as the history of that time represents it. But if you suppose it to be as the history does distinctly explain it, nothing can be imagined more forcible than their sermons; for as they joined oracles with promises in their thundering sermons, so one sees that they cannot be parted.

One may make another reflection upon this matter, by shewing that these oracles and these books were so famous amongst the Jews, that no forgery can be supposed.

The times in which they were writ, are a great proof, for they appeared upon very remarkoble occasions.

One may rank the prophets into four orders: according to the several times in which they appeared: David, and the prophets of his time; those who lived before the Babylonish captivity; as Jonah, Hosea Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Isaiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Jeremiah.

Those who prophesied during the captivity; Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

Those who lived after their return from *Babylon;* Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

Now we have an equal assurance of all these prophets, that they were famous.

Who can deny the oracles of David to have been famous, when they were preserved amongst their public hymns?

One sees that Micah's prediction saved Jeremiah, whom they would have condemned for prophesying the ruin of the temple under Jehoiakim, when Micah had prophesied the same thing under Hezekiah, that is to say, about one hundred and twenty years before this prediction of Jeremiah: here is an event which assures us without affectation, that this prophecy was very well known. Were not therefore the other pro-

phecies, which were in the hands of the Jews, very well known by the whole nation ?

The other prophets lived in very remarkable times : Isaiah under Jotham, Ahaz, and Manasseh, impious princes ; the last of which put him to a cruel death, for the freedom of his censures and predictions.

There was, in the time of every prophet, a great number of circumstances which may be enlarged upon, and which will further prove that their works must of necessity have been very public, and very famous amongst the Jews.

We must not here neglect what does more particularly regard the persons of the prophets.

I. Some of them were priests, that is to say, public ministers of their religion. Jeremiah and Ezekial were of that number : this may be observed in reading of their works, and in observing the nature of their revelations, which were for the most part accommodated by God to those ideas about which the prophets were most employed.

II. Some were very illustrious by their birth : thus David, for instance, was king of Israel, Isaiah, was a prince of the blood, and Daniel was one of the princes of *Judah ;* which may be easily found out by considering the majesty of their style, and greatness of their expressions.

III. Some were very contemptible by their employment, and by their birth : so Amos, for instance, and those other prophets whose father is barely named, without joining to it any honourable title, if the Jews' observation has any strength.

Now, it is well known, that though the gift of prophecy made him who had it sufficiently famous, yet the character of the person often made the prophecy famous. Sometimes indeed the meanness of the person, as in Amos, made the work to be more regarded, every body taking occasion, from the ancient profession of the prophet, to consider the prophecies which he published with more attention.

One ought to observe with care, that those prophets whose writings are preserved, as well as those who did not write, were continually struck at by false prophets, who opposed them with great heat. Since then we have no prophecies preserved but of those whose predictions were accomplished, the event justifying the truth of their predictions, with regard to particular facts near the time which they had foretold to establish their authority; whereas the predictions of others, wanting this character, were neglected, and at last absolutely lost; it appears plainly, that those which remain were things of the greatest reputation among the Jews.

Besides, I may add, that one needs only read their books, to see that they not only foretold obscure things, or what particularly concerned their state, but also things of a more splendid nature, the overthrow of kingdoms, of cities, the destruction of whole nations, the destruction of their own city, with its re-establishment; matters which would render their books very illustrious, and which would cause them to be read, not only by the Jews, but also by the neighbour nations, the Ammonites, Moabites, Assyrians, Persians, Egyptians, &c.

Is not this therefore a very particular thing, and that which made the prophets very illustrious, that the great lustre of the prophets continued but for a certain time? There have been none since the year 3553. Their glory appeared in the history of eight ages; but it does not extend itself any farther. Now why, I pray, should there be no impostors after Malachi, as well as there were impostors before him.

One may imagine, perhaps, that the prophecies were immediately dispersed, some being uttered in one place, and some in another: some in the kingdom of *Judah*, and others in the kingdom of Israel; some in *Babylon*, others in *Egypt*; which might give opportunities for impostors. But,

I. This objection may be strongly retorted back: for how can we conceive, that in the division which separated the Israelites from the Jews, those of *Judah* would charge themselves with the writings published in a kingdom so much an enemy to them, without examination, when every thing which comes from thence ought to appear suspected?

II. They were all collected into particular volumes. But the prophecies of Hosea, Isaiah, and Jeremy, and the most considerable of the rest, are preserved in books which contain many other things.

III. They are exactly joined with the history of the same nation, each one in a place where there was an equal concern to preserve and to gather them together. But besides, they were all collected into one body. In short, the twenty-two Interpreters translated them into Greek in the year of the world 3727, and so submitted them to the examination of the Egyptians; and this also keeps us from doubting of their truth.

This translation was made but one hundred thirty and eight years after Malachi, the last of the prophets.

But what judgment soever may be made of these reflections, the design whereof is only to establish the reputation of these prophecies, and of the books wherein they are written, that so no room may be left for any suspicions of forgery; I shall add two considerations to what I have said already, which ought to appear convincing to every attentive man.

I. One can suspect none but the Jews as forgers of these oracles. Now, not to say any thing of the absurdity of supposing that a whole nation should have subscribed to such an imposture, all the Jews throughout the world were, after their return from the captivity, strongly prepossessed with an opinion of the Messiah's being a great temporal king: and

they have the same belief to this very hour, in all places of the world, wherever they are dispersed.

This being once laid down, I affirm it to be impossible that the Jews should forge oracles which assert expressly, that the Messiah should be put to death in so very odious a manner; for, as I shall afterwards shew, the oldest doctors attributed to the Messiah all those oracles which speak of the death of the Messiah according to the Christians, and which they themselves in process of time were forced to interpret of two Messiahs, one exposed to a world of miseries, and the other only glorious: or at least, I may say, it is impossible that the Jews should consent to a forgery which thwarted their common ideas and pretensions in so very sensible a manner

II. The second consideration establishes the same truth with no less firmness, which is, that the Call of the Gentiles to have a share in the blessings of the covenant which God made with the people of Israel, was the thing in the world from which the Jews had the greatest aversion: they looked upon the blessings which the Messiah was to communicate, as advantages entirely reserved for those of their own nation. How then can we conceive that the Jews should forge so many oracles which should thwart their prejudices so sensibly? or how can we imagine that a whole people would authorize with their approbation an imposture so contrary, and so very opposite to their own opinions.

But it is no hard thing to imagine, that when the Jews were once persuaded of the authority of their prophets, either by their miracles, or by the ready accomplishment of every oracle which they had publicly pronounced, that they should receive their books with a profound submission, and preserve them with the utmost care. But it appears to be an incomprehensible thing, for a people to receive impostures contrary to heir prejudices, and impostures reiterated so

often, without any ground, but what a vast number of records never before heard of would produce.

But I suppose these reflections will suffice to establish the truth of the historical and prophetical books of the Old Testament: so that there will be no need of alleging particular proofs, which might demonstrate the truth of each book in particular, which would carry me out to too great a length.

I shall now consider the oracles themselves, and I shall shew the progress of the light of this revelation, with respect to the promise of the Messiah. That this progress may be the better observed, I shall do three things, as I have formerly observed, without which the mind of a wise reader will not receive satisfaction.

I. I shall explain in a few words the reason why these oracles are interwoven with several histories or prophecies which seem to have no relation to the promise of the Messiah.

II. I shall give such rules as will serve to justify the application which both Jews and Christians have equally made of several oracles only to the Messiah.

III. I shall set the oracles according to the order of time, which will manifest the advancement and progress of that light which is to be found in the revelation itself: as, indeed, it is natural to conceive that God should explain himself more clearly in this matter, in proportion as the things themselves were nearer to their completion.

CHAP. VII.

For what Reason the Oracles which relate to the Messiah, were interwoven with other Things which seem to be very widely distant.

ONE of the greatest difficulties which may be raised against the oracles of the Old Testament which concern the Messiah, is that surprising mixture which one sees of those oracles, and of other subjects which seem to be widely distant from any idea of the Messiah.

There are none so profane as to deny, that if in the same author, and in the same chapter, any man should read in one continued series predictions which should explain the miraculous birth of the Messiah, his family, his preaching, his miracles, his sufferings, his resurrection, his ascension into Heaven, the sending of the Holy Ghost, the calling of the Gentiles: but that the history of the gospel would sufficiently justify Jesus Christ to be the promised Messiah.

But they take it to be a very strange thing, that the apostles should apply several passages in ancient authors to the history of Jesus Christ, though the whole contexture of their books do not seem to oblige us to make any such interpretations.

They therefore suppose that the apostles made several fortunate allusions to the more remarkable passages in those ancient authors, which may pass for predictions of those events which afterwards happened; just as Nonnus wrote the history of the gospel in Homer's verses, and as Eudoxia made a Cento out of Virgil's poem, which contained the same history, though neither Homer nor Virgil had any of the mysteries of the Christian religion then in view.

That this apparent difficulty may be solved, it will be necessary to examine three things: 1. The mat-

ter of fact itself. 2. The reasons which gave occacasion for the doing of it. 3. The impression which this fact has produced in the minds of men, to this very time.

For the first: Though it is well known that common use does not allow men to join foreign ideas in the same discourse, yet we may easily conceive that God might and ought to do it, if we will allow what may be easily collected, that he resolved to send the Messiah into the world: such a practice was the more natural, because the ancient Patriarchs before Moses, and Moses himself, who formed the commonwealth of the Jews, had prepared the minds of the people to such sort of expressions as were raised above the present subject.

And certainly, if one takes but the pains to consider the wisdom and beauty of the authors who writ these prophetical books on the one side, and the character of the writers of the New Testament on the other, he would perceive, that if these words, *That it might be fulfilled*, were of necessity to be changed into these. *As one may perceive a sort of completion of such or such passages in the Old Testament*, yet, notwithstanding that, the most part of those quotations would evince an exact accomplishment, and the oracles which they allege would bear a just proportion to those events which are related by the evangelists in our Saviour's life.

Can any thing be more singular than the prophecy in the seventh of Isaiah, of the Messiah's being born of a virgin; of the piercing of his hands and feet, Psal. xxii. of the mixture of gall which was offered him to drink, hinted at, Psalm lx. 22. of his being sold for thirty pieces of silver, Zechar. xi. 3. or than several others of a like nature, which at present I shall not stand to reckon up?

It must be confessed, however, that these oracles are interwoven for the most part with matters relating to events happening in the time when each prophet

lived, of which seem to be applicable personally to the prophets.

Three orders or reasons may be conceived, which will justify the wisdom of God in the ordering of these oracles in a way which seems so contrary to the common practice of the world.

The first order contains reasons drawn from the person of the Messiah himself, of whom we speak.

The second order contains those which arise from the consideration of the people amongst whom the Messiah was to be born.

The third contains those reasons which respect other nations amongst whom the Messiah was to be preached. I shall examine these three sorts by themselves; and I hope that we may gather from thence, that the eternal wisdom presided over this mixture of these oracles which relate to the Messiah, with other ideas which seem to be wholly foreign to the subject.

In short, it may be urged, that the belief of a Messiah formed of so apparent contradictions, cannot easily be received of the sudden: a Messiah of the seed of David, whom David calls his *Lord;* a Messiah who complains that he is *forsaken by God*, whom however he ought to adore; a Messiah born with the weaknesses of youth, who at the same time is called a *mighty God*, and the *Father of Eternity*, &c.

However, these ideas which seem so opposite ought of necessity to have been so separated by the prophets, lest they should have been looked upon as chimerical descriptions, and incompatible in one and the same subject.

A second reflection which may be made upon this matter, is, That the Jews were bound not only to preserve their oracles, but also to execute them in part: thus, for instance, there was a necessity for them to reject the Messiah, to deliver him up to the Gentiles to be crucified; there was a necessity that their punishment should be as signal as their crime, and that they should be dispersed over the world,

after the destruction of Jerusalem, as the prophets have clearly shewn. Now how could all this have ever been effected, if the description of the Messiah by the prophets had been as historical as that of the apostles, or the evangelists, who gave us only a narrative of matters of fact?

In a word, was it not the interest of the Gentiles, to whom the gospel was to be preached, that these oracles should be scattered up and down the writings of these ancient authors? They were to be called, upon the rejection of the Jews: the Jews were bound to preserve the books of the Old Testament, after they were cast off by God, that the authority of these books and these oracles might be beyond all contest, as testimonies with which we are furnished by the adverse party, which ought to have place, until the fulness of the Gentiles should profess Christianity. Let any one therefore judge if it was not necessary, in this state of affairs, that there should be some obscurity in the prophetical descriptions; and by consequence, that this interweaving of foreign ideas with those which concerned the Messiah, as also this dispersion of the oracles through different places of the sacred writers, was not necessary; and so much the more, as they were uttered upon several occasions by different authors.

And we may affirm it, as a certainty, that, according to the purpose of God, this obscurity did not hinder either Jews or Pagans from perceiving those ruling ideas of a Messiah, when they read the Old Testament. Neither was the dispersion of these oracles through so many different places any greater hindrance to their application; since the Jews laid it down as a constant maxim, that the accomplishment of every thing which we find to be foretold as great and illustrious by the prophets, ought to be looked for in the person of the Messiah, when the events of a nearer date did not answer to the greatness or magnificence of the predictions.

Several ages had passed, from the time in which the prophet had foretold that the Messiah was to be born at *Bethlehem;* and yet we see that the idea of it continued very fresh among the Jews in our Saviour Jesus Christ's time, as is plain from the answer which they gave to Herod.

There are several other examples might be given, which shew that the Jews in our Saviour's time applied the very same oracles to the Messiah which we do; and without question, if it had not been so, the apostles would first have proved that these oracles had relation to the Messiah, which they took for granted, as a thing constantly acknowledged; whereas now they only endeavoured in the gospel to justify that Jesus Christ was the Messiah, by shewing, one by one, that all the characters which the Jews attributed to the Messiah, were to be found in him.

Besides, it is manifest, from our Saviour's explication of the cxth Psalm, that though the Jews could not conceive the solution of that difficulty which naturally appears in those words, *The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand,* yet afterwards they immediately applied that oracle to the Messiah, without seeking after any other subjects to which they might apply it, as the Jews endeavour to do at this day.

But after these remarks upon the mixture of those oracles which relate to the Messiah, with others which seem to be of a more foreign nature, we ought to come to some general rules by which we are to apply the ancient oracles to the Messiah.

CHAP. VIII.

General Rules for the Understanding of ancient Oracles, and for the Application of them to the Messiah.

I. As it appears very natural to conceive that the most ancient revelations ought to be expressed in the most general terms, because they were furthest from the time of their accomplishment, and so one ought to find in them a more imperfect delineation of the design of God; yet it is visible, however, that they ought to contribute very much to the understanding of those later Oracles, because, if these later ones do really contain a more particular explication of his design in sending the Messiah into the world, yet they ought always to follow those ideas which God at first made use of to make his design known in the world.

II. It is natural to grant, that when God had told the Jews, by Jacob and Balaam, that the coming of the Messiah was not suddenly to happen, if he intended to bring them to a certain knowledge of the Messiah after a long revolution of years, by those ceremonial and judicial laws which he established, that he ought to breed them up in an expectation of the Messiah, by lively ideas, and by oracles which should particularly explain the manner and circumstances of his appearance.

III. It is no less natural to acknowledge, that when God promised some illustrious person, or some great advantage to the Jewish nation, he did it only to entertain the people with an expectation of the Messiah, and, upon that account, that he might and ought to join the promise of the Messiah with it, as the principal object which the Jews ought always to have in view, until it should actually happen.

In short, there are two sorts of oracles in the Old Testament: the first are such as it is impossible to apply to any other besides the Messiah; as, for instance, *the place of his birth; the seed of the woman shall break the serpent's head; the Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken.** Whereupon he that added the relation of Moses's death, takes notice that after that there arose up no Prophet in Israel like unto Moses.

The second are such as seem to agree in part to somebody else besides the Messiah, though we may find there also such particular characters, that it is impossible to apply them perfectly, and in their utmost extent, according to the whole force of their expression, to any other subject besides the Messiah. And so Balaam seems to have spoken of David, Numb. xxiii. as Julian the apostate maintains, and of his victories over the Moabites, in the same place where he promises the Messiah, and where he speaks of the manner of his subduing the children of Seth; and so David, in the second Psalm, speaks of the oppositions which he met with, in his advancement to the throne, but in terms too great and too emphatical to be applied to him alone.

Those principles which I have now established, that God promised the Messiah in general terms, but without any intention of sending him into the world until several ages had been passed, gave rise to these two sorts of oracles. On the one side, there was a necessity of explaining this promise distinctly from time to time; and, on the other side, there was a necessity of acccommodating himself to the desires of the Jews, by joining these ideas with every thing that was great and considerable in those events, and in

* Gen. iii. 15. Deut. xviii. 15. Deut. xxxiv. 10.

those persons to whom the prophetic Spirit intended to add a lustre by its predictions.

The Jews are agreed at present, as they were also in our Saviour's time, in the application of the most part of those oracles in the Old Testament, which the Christians apply to the Messiah; and if they dispute some of them, which they explain in a sense perfectly forced, yet at least they cannot dispute these following truths.

I. That the most part of those oracles which we apply to the Messiah, were applied in the same manner by the Jewish Doctors in our Saviour's time: as the xc Psalm, for instance, which has relation to the nature and glory of the Messiah; the ii Psalm, which has respect to the conspiracy of the princes and the people against the Messiah; that place in Micah which fixes the birth of the Messiah to Bethlehem, &c.

II. That, as they thought themselves obliged to make two Messiahs, because of the apparent contradictions which are to be found in those various events which are applied to the Messiah in those predictions; some perfectly glorious, and others every way contemptible; so there is no injustice done, in explaining those oracles which at first seem only to have relation to one single person, of the Messiah, and of some other person.

III. That since they themselves believe, that their ancestors might lawfully pass from one sense to another in their explications of those oracles, so that they were permitted to apply an oracle to some other subject, which did not seem to agree exactly enough to that subject which their ancestors had first in view, as the particular subject concerning which the oracle treated; so it is not only just, but necessary too, to pass from one subject to another, as the Apostles have actually done.

IV. That we ought to pay a much greater deference to the opinion of the ancient Jews, than of those who have been soured by their miseries and

disputes to such a degree, that they have lost that principle of equity which keeps men from denying the most evident truths, and which have been the most universally acknowledged by a whole nation, that was not prepossessed with so great a degree of obstinacy.

But we ought to observe, besides, that this seeming confusion of those oracles which relate to the Messiah, with other subjects treated of by the Prophets, arose from several causes.

I. From the Prophets often joining the ideas of the principal promise, the sending of the Messiah, with the promise of those means which were absolutely necessary for the accomplishment of that promise, as the preservation of the Jews, for instance. So the captivity of the Israelites in *Egypt*, and their departure from hence, with their settling in the land of *Canaan*, which he had promised them before, were foretold, as necessary means, in the order of Providence, to the execution of the great design of God.

For so the Babylonish captivity, and their deliverance therefrom, which are both foretold, are foretold as steps towards the execution of the promise of sending the Messiah.

And so likewise, when they foretold the persecutions by Antiochus, and the other neighbouring nations, they also foretell the deliverance which God would grant to the Jews, and their re-establishment until the birth of the Messiah, which was the accomplishment of that great promise.

II. This seeming confusion arose from the writing of these books piece by piece, which afterwards were put in this order, without having always a regard to the time in which they were written, and without taking notice of all the occasions which engaged the Prophets to write. And thus we see the prophecies which relate to the Messiah joined to several other transactions, and to several other predictions, whose connection is not always so very evident.

III. It arises from the writing of the prophecies each by themselves, so that all those of the same Prophet were put together as they came out, making only a new chapter in the work; whereas they ought to be considered rather with relation to the matter, than to the order in which they lie in the book, as we have it at the present: for the Prophets often borrow their light from what they themselves had said some time before, or from what some other Prophet had foretold, which ought to be observed particularly of those who lived about the same time.

But besides those rules which I proposed in the beginning of this chapter, and besides those observations of the joining the oracles which relate to the Messiah with other subjects, I must add two rules more, which may be useful in determining the sense, of great numbers of oracles which are expressed in figurative terms. The first is, that it is natural to conceive, that when the Prophets were to speak of the Messiah, and when they were intent upon the description of his kingdom, they should make use of expressions which seemed to foretell a sort of overturning of nature, which should happen at that time: but then these expressions ought to be understood in a figurative sense, in the same spiritual sense in which the Christians understood them, as the famous Maimonides allows in that passage of Isaiah where the wolf and the lamb are said to feed together.*

Secondly, since the Messiah is described as one who should unite, in his own person, the glory of the Divinity and the meanness of the human nature together, we ought to understand those oracles in such a manner, that what is *great* in those prophetical descriptions, should not contradict the more contemptible part, when we consider the Messiah as clothed with all the meannesses of the human nature. These ideas, which are often joined in one and the same

† Lib. de Regibus, cap. xii.

oracles, ought to be exactly applied to the different consideration which the Prophets had of the Messiah, or to those various states through which they themselves assure us the Messiah was to pass.

An intelligent reader will easily judge, that I might have added a third rule to the two former; which is, that when a person who has all the characters of a Prophet, applies an old oracle to any subject, one cannot reasonably dispute his application. This the Christians assure us was done by the Apostles in a very great number of oracles. But because this supposes a prophetic character in the Apostles before it has been established by solid proofs, I shall wave the proposal of it at present.

After these general remarks, I shall gather together those oracles in the Old Testament, which relate to the Messiah. I might here follow the order of the matters, by bringing under each article those oracles which relate to it, which would give a great light to the subject, as Eusebius has rightly observed, and as he has practised himself in his books *de Demonstratione Evangelica*. However, I rather chose to follow the order of time in which these oracles were uttered, which did not seem improper to explain those truths which are contained in those oracles.

In short, this is of great importance: I. Because it is very natural to consider the series of God's design, and the connection which may be found in those ideas which are made use of to express it.

II. Because of the necessity of the increase of light in the Revelations, proportionably as the time drew near; so that it is of use to observe how the Divine wisdom followed this natural order in making the later oracles clearer than the former, and in hinting, by little and little, a greater number of circumstances, by which it was necessary to explain them.

III. Because this serves to give us a very strong proof that God intended to furnish us, from the

Scriptures themselves, with that which should fix us in a belief of this capital truth in our religion. In short, when the truth of the books in the Old Testament is once approved, and their age set down, it appears that several Prophets did agree wonderfully, without any concert, in the explication of the same truths, at several times, and in several places and circumstances, which hinder men, for the most part, from agreeing in the most common matters which are the subjects of their reflections.

I have already considered that the wisdom of God followed rules very conformable to the condition and inclination of the Patriarchs, when it spoke of the Messiah. We may see the same conduct in the following times.

So, since God had promised children to Adam in Abel's stead, one may see that he also promised David a son who should sit upon his throne. He explains almost all the circumstances of his coming, his humiliation, his exaltation, the oppositions he should meet with, the victories he should obtain, and his offices, prophetical, priestly, and royal.

One sees afterwards, that the Prophets explain, in a more particular manner all these ideas which David had already proposed. Isaiah speaks of his birth by a virgin, of his spiritual gifts, of his miracles, of his sufferings, of his resurrection, of his calling of all nations into his worship, and of his casting off the Jews.

Those who come after, point out the place particularly, and the town, where the Messiah was to be born; they describe his covenant, and the calling of the Gentiles to the service of the God of Israel.

In short, they describe both the character of the forerunner of the Messiah, and the empire under which he was to appear, and the very year in which he was to die, as Daniel particularly doth.

I cannot undertake to relate all the oracles which are contained in the books of the Old Testament,

they are so very numerous: but I hope at least, to mark the more principal, and the most illustrious ones, and to explain them in such a manner, that all shall be obliged to acknowledge, I. That God designed to give infallible proofs to his church, of his design in sending the Messiah into the world, and to preserve the continual remembrance of him, as of a person who was promised to give all comfort to his church, and whose coming should bring salvation to all mankind; II. That the care which he took in specifying all the circumstances of his coming into the world, shews that he designed to prevent the scandal which the abject life and death of a Messiah might produce, and the false judgments which men might form of the works of a Divine wisdom, when they only judge of them by the outside; III. That he designed to give an infallible proof, that this sending of the Messiah was the work of his wisdom and fidelity, which at last accomplished a thing, the design whereof had been proposed to mankind immediately after the fall.

CHAP. IX.

Of those Oracles concerning the Messiah which are to be found in the Book of Genesis.

I BEGIN with those Oracles which are contained in the book of Genesis, since it is convenient to touch them all over again in few words.

The first oracle is comprised in these terms, Gen. iii. 15. *I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*

This oracle has considerable advantages, though it is expressed in figurative terms. God uttered it in the beginning of the world, after he had given sen-

tence against Adam, and the woman, and the serpent, in a very sensible manner, even under a human shape, if we may dare to affirm it. He uttered it before the head of all mankind, which ought to make it considerable to all his posterity. He expresses it by an allusion to the nature of the temptation, and to the form of the serpent, which the tempter had took upon him. He preserves thereby the memory of the temptation, by inspiring all mankind with an invincible hatred against all serpents in general, though the tempter had took the shape but of one particular kind, for an instrument to accomplish his design.

In short, this oracle clearly shews, 1. That it should be particularly the seed of the woman; Adam not being touched at. 2. That the seed of the woman, that is to say, the Messiah, should destroy the power of the serpent, expressed by the head, that is to say, the power of the Devil. 3. That this seed should, however, receive a considerable wound from the Devil, though it should only touch his heel, the least considerable part of the Messiah. 4. That all the blessings which God should give to mankind after the fall, should be grounded upon the sending of this seed into the world: this is more clearly expressed by God's telling Abraham, *That in thy seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed.**

That this oracle, Gen. iii. has relation to the Messiah, is plain: 1. Because it is the source and abridgment of the whole revelation; 2. Because all the ancient Jews in effect understood it so; 3. Because the Apostles, in following the ideas of the synagogue, plainly referred them to the Messiah, by the allusions which they make to them,† John xii., Romans xvi., 2 Cor. xi., 1 John, iii.

* Gen. xxii. 18. † Targum in h. l.

The second oracle which relates to the Messiah, is contained in these terms, when God spoke to Abraham; *In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.*

This oracle is very illustrious: 1. By the person of Abraham, whom God made the depositary of it, and who made himself ready to sacrifice his own Son: 2. By the frequent repetitions which God made to this Patriarch, using in effect all those ways which he afterwards followed in his revelations to the Patriarchs, for fifty years together, from the year 2083 to the year 2133 of the world: 3. Because it was accompanied by the circumcision; so that, though it foretold that the advantages should be in common to all nations, yet it limited the Messiah to be born of Abraham's seed.

It also intimates very clearly, 1. That the blessings which it promises should be in common to all nations; 2. That this blessing should be quite of another nature from temporal ones, as the increase, for instance, and the power of Abraham's posterity, which had been promised to him before St. Paul's reflection, Gal. iii. 8. That God spake of seed in the singular number, is very remarkable; and so much the more, because the Jews made a like observation upon a parallel place in the Old Testament.

As God repeated this promise when he spoke to Isaac in the year 2200, and to Jacob in the year 2245, Gen. xxviii. 14. *And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth; and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee, and in thy seed, shall all the families of the earth be blessed,* so one ought to repeat again the same reflections. This ought only to be added, That God restrained the honour of bringing forth the Messiah to Jacob, the son of Isaac, that the Edomites might not come in to challenge the right, as I have very particularly explained in my reflections upon Genesis.

We come now to the oracle which Jacob gave in the year 2315. It is one of the clearest predictions in the whole Bible, and it is expressed in these terms: *Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise; thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies: thy father's children shall bow down before thee. Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion: who shall rouse him up? The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes. His eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk.* Gen. xlix. 8—12. I know very well, that some of the Jews have pretended that Moses ought to be understood for Shiloh; but this is so ridiculous an opinion, that there is not the least probability to maintain it. What sceptre had Judah, before Moses came? How was Moses the expectation of the Gentiles, and the object of their hope?

And, indeed, the body of the Jewish nation are agreed, that this oracle was meant of the Messiah; so Onkelos the Chaldee Paraphrast, so the Jerusalem Targum, and Jonathan's, so R. Solomon Jarchi, Abenezra, and Kimchi, are agreed.

Now these reflections may be naturally drawn from this oracle, which Jacob uttered upon his death-bed.

1. This oracle is found amongst a great number of oracles which concern the other tribes of the Israelites, and which were accomplished as to every tribe.

2. This oracle contains several particular events which relate to private transactions in the tribe of Judah.

3. This oracle was, as it were, Jacob's will in favour of Judah, at a time when he divided amongst his children their portions which they were to expect from him.

4. This was a preference of Judah, who was but the fourth, to Reuben who was the eldest, and who, by consequence, ought to have been the head of his family. The sceptre, and the authority of legislator, was promised to Judah, which did not belong to him by the right of his birth.

Jacob therefore prepared his children to look for an accomplishment of those promises made to Abraham in Judah, as well for the kings who were to be descended from him, as for the nations of the earth who were to be blessed in Abraham's seed.

But we must go yet further. I shall therefore observe, 1. That this prophecy particularly regarded the tribe of Judah, as all the preceding and following oracles concerned those tribes whose heads were then named by Jacob.

2. That this prophecy concerns the tribe of Judah, as settled in the land of *Canaan*, by a distinct establishment from the other tribes. In short, it is certain that the tribe of Judah had some superiority. Thus God, for instance, commanded that tribe to march the first, Num. ii. & x. Its heads offered their presents first, Num. vii. 11, 12, 13. In Joshua's time this tribe took its division, without drawing lots for it. One sees that God ordered the tribe of Judah to lead the people out to the conquest of the rest of the country; one sees the same prerogatives in the book of Judges, though they were often of other tribes. From David's time to the taking of *Jerusalem* by Nebuchadnezzar, the kings were all of that tribe; and Zorobabel afterwards headed those who returned out of *Chaldea*. The book of the Chronicles names the tribe of Judah first; Herod was the first king who was wholly a stranger.

3. That Jacob supposed that the tribe of Judah should be in possession of a form of government, and of a community, till the coming of the Messiah. This was all very proper; and indeed we see that his tribe continued under its own governors, after the other tribes had been transported, 2 Kings, xvii. 18. It almost swallowed up Benjamin and Levi, who settled in their country; and indeed Josephus assures us, that there were but few of the ten tribes who came back again into *Judea* under Ezra, for the greatest part of them stayed beyond *Euphrates;* and we see that at last they gave their name to the whole country.

4. That this oracle was fulfilled by degrees. This I have observed already of the pre-eminency of the tribe of Judah before David's time, which was a step to the advancement of it to the throne; and the lessening of their dignity, which was to be entirely taken away when the Messiah came, had also the same gradations. David was set upon the throne over all Israel; but his house lost the government over ten tribes in his grandson Rehoboam's time. His successors were tributary to the neighbouring princes: whereas David carried his empire to the walls of *Babylon;* though afterwards the Babylonians subdued the Jews, and deposed the kings of *Judah.* At last, they absolutely lost all that authority which they had hitherto kept. They recovered a little in the person of Zorobabel; and though they were soon after invaded by the Seleucidæ, yet the Maccabees preserved them a little, till Herod and the Romans took away all those remnants which they had yet left.

In carrying these views of this oracle further, we may yet further observe, 1. That God intended to oblige the Israelites to wait for the sceptre in the tribe of Judah. It must be there, before it could depart thence. It was natural to conceive, that the Jews were to look yet much further than David.

Those words, *It shall not depart*, denote a continuance of the sceptre in the house of David for some considerable time.

2. It is easy to comprehend a lessening of the dignity in the term lawgiver, [See Judges v. 14. מחקקים] which God seems to have made use of, as a mark of the fall, which I have observed in the person of Zorobabel, who, as to the time, was about the middle of the oracle.

3. In a word, it is easy to acknowledge that this oracle assigns the epocha in gross for the time of the coming of the Messiah, viz. the ruin of that authority and power which the Jews (properly so called from the tribe of Judah) should enjoy after their re-establishment. God could not explain himself more particularly, in stating the precise time when this thing should happen.

There are two other very considerable oracles; one uttered by Balaam, in the year 2553, before the king of the Moabites, who had sent for him to curse the people of Israel that lay in the plains; the other uttered the same year, by Moses, the famous legislator of the Jews. The first is inserted, by Moses, in the xxivth chapter of Numbers; the other is in the xviiith of Deuteronomy.

The first is in these words: *I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite all the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Seth. And Edom shall be a possession, Seir, also shall be a possession for his enemies, and Israel shall do valiantly. Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city.*

One ought to observe, that Balaam's character, the presence of the king and the elders of Moab, and all the circumstances in which it was uttered, do advance its authority considerably.

But the turn of his expressions is equally singular and remarkable. 1. He speaks of the Messiah as of a star, hinting out to us the celestial nature of the Messiah: whereas hitherto God had only described him under the figure of a bare man: though the other was made sufficiently intelligible, when the destruction of the empire of the tempter, and the right of procuring a blessing unto all the nations of the earth, which he was personally to enjoy, were attributed to him; things infinitely beyond the power and condition of mankind to perform, were attributed to him. 2. He observes, that this person of whom he speaks such magnificent things, ought however to be descended from Jacob; which ratifies Jacob's prophecy in favour of Judah. 3. Though he hints very clearly at the effects of those blessings and temporal victories, which Jacob's posterity was to obtain over their neighbours, yet at the same time he insinuates plainly enough, that the bestowing of the blessing which all the nations of the world should obtain, was to be reserved to Jacob's seed; when he refused to retract those promises of blessing which God had made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to which oracles he made a sensible allusion.

And it is very important to consider, that the Jews always applied this oracle to the Messiah, as may be seen by their Chaldee paraphrast; and it was acknowledged so generally, that the famous Achiba, who lived under the emperor Hadrian, pretended that Barchocheba was the Messiah, because his name was Chochab, which is a star in Hebrew: as if God intended to mark that impostor for the true Messiah, by foretelling what name he should be called by.

The oracle which Moses uttered a little before his death, is very considerable. The people being terrified with the manner of God's speaking to them upon Mount Sinai, desired that God would no longer speak as he had done before, but that Moses should give them an account of whatever God should com-

mand. Hereupon, God consents to their request, and promised them, by Moses, that he would raise them up a Prophet like unto Moses, to whom they ought to hearken, upon pain of being cut off.

He that made the addition to the last book of Moses, wherein his death is described, takes notice that there never rose up afterwards a Prophet in Israel, like to Moses. If it was Ezra who made that addition, then here is a plain and clear decision against the Jews, some of whom assert, that Joshua or Jeremiah was the Prophet whom Moses promised: if it was Eleazar, who lived in Joshua's time, then here Joshua at least is excluded from this privilege of being designed by Moses.

But it is to no purpose to stop at such frivolous objections: one needs only observe Moses's character, to take notice of four certain marks of Moses's prophecies, which advance him infinitely above all other Prophets. 1. He had all the sorts of revelations which are generally found amongst all the Prophets. 2. He was illustrious for great numbers of miracles. 3. He not only reformed the errors and false ways of worship then prevailing amongst the Jews, but he set up a new worship, and a new form of religion. 4. He introduced this law, and this way of worshipping God, by a conversation with God, as one sees amongst two intimate friends. In which of the Prophets may these four characters be found.

The Galileans themselves testified plainly that these characters ought only to be found in the person of the Messiah, when they saw the miracles of Jesus Christ, John vi. 14; and the Jews acknowledged the same in our Saviour's time, when they applied that oracle to the Messiah, John i. 45.

But if these oracles were obscurely hinted at in this oracle, one may see them clearly applied to the Messiah in the following oracles, proportionably as the revelation increased, and as God unravelled the ideas of these ancient oracles, by explaining them

more particularly by those Prophets whom he afterwards raised up. This may clearly be seen, if we pass on to those oracles which were uttered by David, and the other Prophets who lived about his time.

CHAP. X.

Of the Oracles which concern the Messiah in the Book of Psalms.

THESE were the Oracles which were the subjects of the meditations of the faithful from the year of the world 2553, in which Moses died, until David's time, who was particularly chosen by God to be the only man of his family, which was also separated from all the other families of Judah, who came from *Pharez*, from whom the Messiah was to be descended.

I have observed, in another place, that in all probability God raised David to the throne, only to make the genealogy of that family better known, from which the Messiah was to spring.

As this double advancement of David, one to the throne of Israel, the other to be the father to the Messiah, ought to have inspired him with lively resentments of gratitude, and as his oracles would be much more famous, being uttered by a royal Prophet, and the rather because God employed him in the making a just regulation of the service of the sanctuary; so we see that David employed his pen in giving more distinct ideas of that Messiah which he promised them.

The name Messiah properly signifies a person consecrated by anointing to be King, Priest, or Prophet. This name was particularly applied by David, and the Prophets who lived after him, to that holy seed which God had promised to Abraham's family by

Isaac, by Jacob, by Judah, and by David; and one may observe in David's Psalms, and in the Prophets of his time, that they gave the name of Messiah to the promised seed, under one or other of these three senses.

The characters both of a Prophet and a Priest, though each of them are august enough, yet yield to that of a King. These are the different ideas which David, and the Prophets of that time, followed in all the variety of their descriptions.

But it is not my design to give a particular account of all those oracles which describe these different characters, for fear of being excessively long; so I shall content myself with observing two things: 1. That David alone uttered more oracles than all the Prophets who came before him; 2. That these oracles of David, concerning the Messiah, are clearer than all the precedent ones.

Now, I say, that David alone uttered more oracles than any one Prophet who came before him; thus in the xlth Psalm he explains the decree by which the Messiah became the servant of God, and clothed himself with the form of a servant, to offer unto God a more perfect obedience than that which had formerly been offered by burnt-offerings and sacrifices. He describes the measure and the nature of his ministry, which was to consist in the instruction of the people in righteousness, truth, and the salvation of God. Psalm xl. 7—11. *Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire, mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then, said I, Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me. I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart. I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart, I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed*

thy loving-kindness, and thy truth, from the great congregation.

In the xvith Psalm he describes the inviolable steadfastness of the Messiah to the service of God, who had sent him to form a great people; with the manner of his deliverance by God from all the powers of the world, by raising him up from the dead, and afterwards receiving him into glory. Psalm xvi. 8, &c. *I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.*

In the xxiid Pslam he describes the agonies through which the Messiah was to pass, the manner of his death, the victory which he should obtain over his enemies, and the conversion of those very nations which had cast him off.

In the cixth Psalm he speaks of the oppressions of the Messiah, pronouncing great numbers of imprecations against that very person who should signalize himself by persecuting his innocence. *Hold not thy peace, O God of my praise: for the mouth of the wicked, and the mouth of the deceitful, are opened against me; they have spoken against me with a lying tongue.* Verse 1, 2. *Set thou a wicked man over him, and let Satan stand at his right hand. When he shall be judged, let him be condemned, and let his prayer become sin. Let his days be few, and let another take his office.* Verse 6, 7, 8. *Because that he remembered not to shew mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man, that he might even slay the broken in heart. As he loved cursing, so let it come to him: as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him. As*

he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment, so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones. Verse 16, 17, 18.

In the lxixth Psalm he carries this argument further, in his description of the zeal of the Messiah for the house of God, and of those insultings which he should meet with, and the manner of their giving him vinegar and gall to drink, with the hardening and rejection of those who had used him in that manner. *Save me, O God, for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.* Verse 1, 2. *Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord God of Hosts, be ashamed for my sake: let not those that seek thee, be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel. Because for thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face. I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children: for the zeal of thy house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee, are fallen upon me.* Verse 6, 7, 8, 9. *Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. They gave me also gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. Let their table become a snare before them; and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap. Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not; and make their loins continually to shake. Pour out thy indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them.* Verse 20, 21, 22, 23, 24.

In the xcviith and xcviiith Psalms, he describes the destruction of idolatry when the promised Saviour should appear, and when God should raise him upon his throne. *The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof.* Psalm xcvii. 1. *Confounded be all they*

that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols: worship him, all ye gods. Zion heard, and was glad, and the daughters of Judah rejoiced; because of thy judgments, O Lord: for thou, Lord, art high above all the earth: thou art exalted far above all gods. Verse 7, 8, 9. *O sing unto the Lord a new song, for he hath done marvellous things; his right hand, and his holy arm, have gotten him the victory. The Lord hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen. He hath remembered his mercy and his truth towards the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. Make a joyful noise unto the Lord all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise.* Psalm xcviii. 1—4.

In the lxviiith Psalm he explains the glory of the Messiah, and his ascension into heaven, with the effusion of those gifts which he was to spread abroad for the conversion of the nations, that God might dwell amongst the most rebellious. *Princes shall come out of Egypt, Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God. Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth: O sing praises unto the Lord. To him who rideth upon the heavens of heavens, which were of old; lo, he doth send out his voice, and that a mighty voice. Ascribe ye strength unto God: his excellency is over Israel, and his strength is in the clouds. O God, thou art terrible out of thy holy places, the God of Israel is he that giveth strength and power unto his people.* Verse 31, 32, 33, 34, 35.

The Prophets who lived in the time of David, or soon after, pursued all his ideas. One sees that Nathan 2. Sam. vii. foretells Solomon's glory, and the honour which he should have in building that temple of which David had formed the design before, in such a manner, that he clearly shews three things which will by no means agree with Solomon. 1.

That God should raise up a son to David after his death, and place him upon his throne; whereas Solomon was born, and advanced to the throne by David himself. 2. It was promised that his government should be endless; this is not applicable to the royal posterity of David, who had but twenty successors, who bore the title of kings. 3. That God particularly promises to be the Father of this promised Son, which is not more applicable to Solomon than to David, to Josiah, or Hezekiah.

One sees that Corah's posterity gave that account of Solomon's glory upon his marriage with the king of *Egypt*'s daughter; he speaks of a throne much more august than that prince's was, and he represents to us a God consecrated with oil of gladness above his fellows. This exactly sets forth the august character of the Messiah, and his anointing to be the king of all nations, their Prophet, and their Priest. Psalm xlv. 1. *My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.* Verse 7, 8. *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness; therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.* Verse 16. *Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayst make princes in all the earth.*

One sees the same Prophets inviting all nations, in the xlviith Psalm, to acknowledge the kingdom of God; which Daniel afterwards describes as that which the Jews already knew was to be governed by the Messiah.

One sees Asaph describing in the fiftieth Psalm the manner of the Messiah's assembling all people, and of his rejecting the ancient and legal service, and prescribing a spiritual one, even sacrifices of vows, and of praise. Verse 6—10. *And the heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God is Judge*

himself. Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices, or thy burnt-offerings, to have been continually before me. I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goat out of thy folds. For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.

One sees the author of the lxxiid Psalm describing the glory and happiness of Solomon's kingdom in such a manner, that he carries his views as high as the Messiah at the same time; he foretells the continuance of his kingdom as long as the sun and moon endures; that all the kings of the world should bring presents to him, and that all the nations of the earth should worship before him. Verse 5. *They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations.* Verse 8. *He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.* Verse 11. *All kings shall fall down before him, all nations shall serve him.* Verse 17—19. *His name shall endure for ever; his name shall be continued as long as the sun, and men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who only doth wondrous things: and blessed be his glorious name for ever, and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen and Amen.*

One sees that Ethan the Ezrahite, who is represented to us as the wisest man in that age after Solomon, explains the promise made to David of a son who should reign for ever, and whose throne should be immovable, in the lxxxixth Psalm. This agrees to none but the Messiah, whom he describes as the first-born of the princes of the earth, and as the Son of God, in a manner which is not applicable to any of David's posterity, except only to the Messiah. Verse 19, 20. *Then thou spakest in visions to the Holy One, and saidst, I have laid help upon one*

that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people. I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him. Verse 24—29. *My faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him; and in my name shall his horn be exalted. I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers. He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father, my God, and the Rock of my Salvation. Also I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven.* Verse 33—37. *Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness, and I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me: it shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven.*

One needs only read over the Psalms which I have now taken notice of, and which are almost all applied by the Jews to the Messiah, to see the great number of oracles which God gave in David's time, concerning this matter; not to speak of those which describe the calling of the Gentiles, which fill up the book of the Psalms almost entirely.

I come now to the proof of the second article, which is to shew, that the oracles which David uttered are much clearer, and much more particular, than those which were given before. This I hope to prove beyond all contradiction, by considering two Psalms, the one whereof describes the prodigious humiliation of the Messiah, and the other describes his advancement at the right hand of God; two of the greatest truths declared by the Prophets, and two

the most singular of all the characters which belong to the promised Messiah.

CHAP. XI.

Considerations upon the Sufferings of the Messiah, and upon his glorious Ascension into Heaven, foretold by David in the xxiid *and* cxth *Psalms.*

IT cannot be denied, when one reads the xxiid Psalm, but that the person there spoken of is described figuratively, as one exposed to the severest sufferings, from which he is afterwards delivered by the Divine assistance, and advanced to rule an empire which extends itself over all the nations of the world, and afterwards universally adored.

1. He that speaks, cries out as if God had forsaken him, and had stopped his ears unto his cry.

2. He describes himself as a worm, and no man, as the reproach of men, and one despised by the people.

3. He takes notice, that those who were witnesses of his sufferings, made a mock at them, bidding him trust in God, that he might deliver him.

4. He ranks his enemies amongst the bulls of Bashan, and raging lions, who (according to the prophetical way of speaking) are the chief men in the nation. Amos iv. 1. Ezek. xxii. 25.

5. He joins the dogs with them, that is, profane persons, or the Gentiles.

6. He represents his hands and his feet as pierced with nails.

7. He shews that he was stretched out before, in such a manner, that they might count all his bones: this expresses the idea of a man fastened to a cross, and exposed to the view of all the world: as he

afterwards describes himself to be quite dried up, from the loss of blood, when he was crucified.

8. He takes notice of their parting his garments, and,

9. Of their casting lots upon his vesture.

In short, one sees, throughout all the expressions of this Psalm, the image of a death which was equally shameful and cruel.

The other part of the Psalm gives us an account of the deliverance of that person who is mentioned in this holy hymn.

1. He obliges himself to praise the name of the Lord in the most numerous assembly.

2. He observes it as an effect of this deliverance, that all the ends of the world should remember, and turn unto the Lord, and that all the kindreds of the nations should worship before him.

3. At last, he takes notice that the kingdom of God should spread itself over all the nations of the world.

One may judge, by the history of David, whether this Psalm is applicable to him; therein we may see all the crosses which he underwent, particularly represented, during all the former years of his reign. But there we have no account that David ever suffered any thing like that which is so exactly described in this Psalm. And this may be said further, that when David took any occasion to paint out his sufferings to us, he has put in several strokes which only relate to the Messiah, and which shew us, in a very lively manner, that he was to pass through much greater trials than any of those from which David had been delivered.

The later Jews, who endeavour to verify this prophecy in Esther or Mordecai, agree with us at the bottom, that David carried his views further than barely his own sufferings; and those also who apply it to the people of Israel, must acknowledge the same truth, even against their wills.

But the more ancient Jews were more equitable in their applications of the xxiid Psalm to the Messiah. They applied it to him in earnest, even after the time of Jesus Christ, when the comparison of these characters of the Messiah, which may be found so exactly in the death of Jesus Christ, led them to an opposition of this truth.

And certainly there needs very little equity to acknowledge that this oracle, or rather this heap of oracles, belonged to the Messiah, by the confession and agreement of the Jews in our Saviour's time.

1. They had not then resolved to make their advantages of the writer's fault, who writ [כארי] *like a lion*, instead of [כארו] *they have pierced* my feet, as they have done since. In short, Aquila, who lived a hundred years after Jesus Christ, and the other Jewish interpreters, Symmachus and Theodotion, translated that passage as we now read it.

2. The notion which the Synagogue always had of the sufferings of the Messiah, obliged them to suppose two Messiahs, one suffering, and the other glorious, rather than to contradict that truth openly, which is expressed by these oracles in so particular a manner.

3. Nothing can be imagined to be more ridiculous than to suppose that Jesus Christ should quote the first words of this Psalm upon the cross, thereby to engage all mankind to take notice of the accomplishment of this ancient oracle in all his sufferings, if we suppose that this Psalm, even by the confession of the Jews, had no relation to the Messiah.

The same reflection may be made concerning the apostles, who have quoted so many passages of this Psalm, to prove that Jesus Christ was the Messiah; because one may find in his death, and in the circumstances of it, such a literal and exact accomplishment of this ancient prophecy.

But if it should be objected, that, after all, this agreement of the Synagogue can make no more than a strong prejudice, this may be easily answered, by considering that when the Psalmist speaks of the extent of his kingdom over the whole earth, it was that circumstance which determined the Synagogue in their application of this whole Psalm to the Messiah; because as the Jews themselves acknowledge, this extent of empire is one of those characters which, according to the ancient oracles, is applicable to none but the Messiah. In short, (because it is of great importance, I shall repeat it here again) common sense led those who considered these ancient oracles, to compare them (as naturally they ought) with those that went before, and to determine the scope and intent of the later ones by the relation which they had to the precedent ones; and there was only need of one considerable clause, to make a certain determination after they had made such a comparison. This the Jews were certainly convinced of, when they acknowledged that the last words of David, 2 Sam. xxiii. 1—8, were to be applied to the Messiah, by comparing them with Balaam's oracle of the Messiah, Numb. xxiv.

We may therefore take it for granted, that David did not absolutely speak of himself in the xxiid Psalm, and that he carried his views as far as the Messiah; that he gave a great number of characters to his posterity, whereby they might distinguish, notwithstanding the greatness of his sufferings, and even the better by his very sufferings, than which no clearer marks can possibly be given; because there is nothing more involuntary than enduring of miseries, nor nothing which depends less upon the choice of the person who is to undergo them, than the particular kind of punishment, or than the circumstances which must accompany his death, when it is once left to the unjust power of violent enemies.

We come now to the cxth Psalm, which in a very few words contains several very important characters of the Messiah, which are very distinctly expressed.

If one considers it exactly, it seems to have been composed after that Nathan had acquainted David with the glory of his son, which God had promised him; such a son who should build a house wherein God should dwell for ever, and who should sit upon a throne which should never be overturned; whereas David had only formed a design of building a temple to the Lord.

In short, one sees that the spirit of prophecy had given him a view of the glory of this august king who should be born of his seed, and of the glory of his kingdom which should never be destroyed. David advances this king not only above all MEN, by calling him *his Lord*, who was himself a king; but also above the angels, by making him sit at the right hand of God in the kingdom of heaven. This is personal. He also describes the glory of his office, by considering him as a priest of a higher order than that of Aaron, from whom Melchisedec received tithes in the person of Abraham: and, in a word, he acquaints us with the progress of his kingdom, and the greatness of his victories. Let us examine all these characters of themselves.

1. He brings in God speaking to the Messiah, whom he calls *his Lord: Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thy enemies thy footstool.* This points out to us, 1. That the Messiah ought to be advanced to glory; 2. That God intended to subdue his enemies by little and little, whilst the Messiah should be in his glory, as it was foretold in the second Psalm.

2. He observes, That the empire of the Messiah was to begin at *Jerusalem*, or *Sion*, which was then to be under the power of his enemies.

3. He expressly points out the quick extent of the kingdom of the Messiah, with the character of those

who would submit to him without constraint or violence, which was much practised under Moses's law.

4. He positively asserts, that the Messiah should be established a *Priest after the order of Melchisedec*, which would overturn the whole Levitical priesthood, which then was to have an end; yet the very same king who designed the draught of the temple which Solomon built some time after, undermines the foundations of this material building, and clearly supposes that the Levitical ministry, which was fixed to Solomon's temple, should last no longer than until the coming of the Messiah.

5. He particularly takes notice, that the Messiah should, by the Divine assistance, destroy all that should oppose his power, and should bring all things under his dominion, as a conqueror who should overturn all things with the utmost violence.

Nothing can be greater than these several oracles; nothing can be more particular than his description of the glory to which the Messiah was to be advanced after that prodigious humiliation which is described in the xxiid Psalm; but what can we suppose to be the reason of David's speaking of the Messiah in this Psalm? This I am further to consider.

One may say that the Jews did not constantly apply these prophecies to the Messiah, before the coming of Jesus Christ, without good grounds: they could not apply them to any of David's successors; none of David's successors was both king and priest. Uzziah was the only man who dared to usurp the priesthood; and he was punished by God himself. The Maccabees were not of David's tribe, but were Levites; and none of them ever went up into heaven, to sit at the right hand of God. Besides, their kingdom did not begin in *Sion*, and they never brought any other kings under their authority. They applied it therefore to the Messiah, pursuant to the maxim which they drew from a frequent meditation upon the ancient oracles, that we ought only to look for an accomplishment of those prophecies in the person of

the Messiah, which they never could find to be fulfilled any where else; when, at the same time, they knew that the exactness and truth of those predictions could not be any ways contested.

In short, it plainly appears that they did unanimously apply it to the Messiah before Jesus Christ came into the world, from the manner of their confessing it to our Saviour, when he pressed them with the cxth Psalm; though they could not explain the manner how David should call the Messiah Lord, when they allowed him to be his Son, Matt. xxii. 48.

One sees nothing so frequently urged by the Apostles as this cx Psalm; they use it upon all occasions to prove that Jesus Christ had the characters of the true Messiah, such as David had given him in the cxth Psalm, supposing still, as a thing beyond dispute, that David spoke of the Messiah in this famous prophecy.

So that, what evasions soever the Jews may endeavour to make use of, yet they cannot deny but that their most famous Doctors, since Jesus Christ, have upon several occasions followed the old notions of the Synagogue in this matter. One finds in their writings great numbers of testimonies which confirm this truth. I shall not mention them at present, because they are well enough known, and because I would make haste to come to that new degree of revelations which God gave to those Prophets who gave new characters of the Messiah to the Jewish nation for some ages after David's time.

They are in too great a number to be spoken of, one by one, and I am forced to range them under certain heads; though I intend at the same time to make more particular reflections upon some of those which give us an account of the most remarkable truths, and so by that means furnish us with the most sensible character whereby we may know more certainly the person whom God proposed to his people in such a manner as the Saviour of Israel, and whom he had before called *the Expectation of the Gentiles.*

CHAP. XII.

That the Messiah was to have a Forerunner, and what was to be his Character.

WE shall make it manifest, in the sequel of the discourse, that the Messiah was to appear in a very despicable state, and consequently that his appearance would be very distasteful to those who expected him in the splendour of a great king and conqueror. To oppose this pre-conceived opinion of theirs, the Divine Wisdom thought fit to appoint one to be his forerunner, who should call the Jews to repentance, and a reformation of their lives, and form in them a true notion of the ministry of the Messiah, as of a person who was to prescribe to them laws of the greatest purity and holiness. And indeed, in examining the holy Scriptures, we find that the appearance of the Messiah was to be ushered in by a person thus distinguished: the following prophecies are very express to this purpose.

The first of these we find in the xlth of Isaiah, verse 3, where the Prophet speaks thus, before the destruction of the first temple; *The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make strait in the desert a highway for our God.** The Jews acknowledge that this chapter speaks of the comfort the Messiah was to procure for his people, and that the voice mentioned here refers to those who were to declare and proclaim his coming†

We meet with a second prophecy in Malachi, who prophesied after the rebuilding of the temple, and who, having shut up the vision, precisely points at the time wherein he was to appear, viz. during the

* Isai. xl. 3. † Abenezra.

second temple, chap. iii. verse 1—4. *Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple; even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in, behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap. And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.*

The Jews own that these words also of Malachi speak of the forerunner of the Messiah.*

But we ought to observe in the foregoing passages, 1. That they have a manifest relation to the time of the Messiah's coming. Should the Jews deny this (as indeed they unanimously acknowledge it) it would be an easy matter to convince them, 1. By urging the authority of the Evangelists, who apply these very passages to the ministry of John the Baptist. Thus we find that St. Matthew and St. Mark make a manifest allusion to these two prophecies:† Zachary also, the father of John the Baptist, applies that of Isaiah to his son; and his authority is the more considerable, because he was a priest. 2. By an attentive considering the passages themselves. 3. By the common consent of the Jewish church, who by a generally received and undoubted tradition, that Elijah the Tishbite (the Septuagint, in their translation of that place of Malachi, telling us as much) was to be the forerunner of the Messiah; and we find that, in the time of our Saviour, the multitude and his disciples supposed the same thing: and the Jews at this day have the same persuasion, viz. that Elias is to come before the appearance of the Mes-

* R. Saad. † Matt. iii. 1. Mark i. 2.

siah; from which tradition of the Jews the Christians of old did, and many at this day do believe, that Elias shall resume the functions of his ministry before the last coming of Jesus Christ *to judge the quick and the dead.*

2. We may observe, that the character of the forerunner of the Messiah being that which the Jews had much in their eye, it was needful for it to be as notable and extraordinary as was that of the Prophet Elias, whose ministry was without dispute the most remarkable and illustrious of all the Prophets since Moses; which gave the Prophet Malachi occasion to call him Elias, much upon a like account as the Prophet Ezekiel calls the Messiah David.*

But above all things, we must carefully observe the several marks the Prophets give us of this forerunner.

The Prophet Isaiah gives us these following particulars: 1. That his ministry was to be very signal, and attended with general respect and veneration; 2. That he was to preach in the wilderness; 3. That he was to call sinners to repentance; 4. That he was to confound those who were most eminent in authority, and to comfort the poor and humble; 5. That he was immediately to precede the Messiah; 6. That his ministry was to usher in that grand revelation of the glory of God in the presence of all flesh, i. e. before all nations of the earth, who were to be called by the Messiah to his religion, according to the express declaration of the Prophets.

The Prophet Malachi doth most distinctly represent to us, 1. That the mission of this forerunner was not far off, *Behold*, saith he, *I send my messenger*. He speaks of it as of a thing at the door. Now it is evident, and the Jews themselves own it, that from the time of Malachi, there was never a prophet, till the appearance of John the Baptist.

* Ezek. xxviv. 23, 24.

2. It tells us that this Elias was to call sinners to repentance, and *to prepare the way before the face of the Lord.*

3. That he was immediately to precede the Messiah: this he expresses by saying, *And the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the Angel of the covenant whom ye delight in.* It is evident that he speaks here of the Messiah, whom he calls, not only the *Angel or Messenger of the covenant*, but also the *Lord:* the Lord*, forasmuch as God had promised him as a king to the house of David; and *the Angel of the covenant*, because God by him was to make a new covenant with the nations of the earth, as Jeremy declares, chap. xxxi.

CHAP. XIII.

That the Messiah was to be born before the Dissolution of the Jewish State, and the Destruction of the Second Temple.

THE preceding mark of the Messiah leads us to this we are now to speak of, and affords it considerable light. I will not repeat here what I have already set down concerning that prophecy, Gen. xlix. verse 10. concerning the time when our Saviour was to appear in the world. It is evident, at first sight, that that prophecy evinces three things: 1. That the sceptre was to be in the house of *Judah*, before ever the Shiloh was to come. 2. That the sceptre was to give way to an inferior dignity, which the Prophet sets forth by the word lawgiver; and which did take place till the time of Zerubbabel, and his successors. 3. There was a necessity that this last dignity also was to come to an end, which happened not till the ad-

* Psalm ii.

vancement of Herod the Great to the throne of *Judea*. And it is easy to confirm this truth by other oracles which give a further light to this our explication.

We have several that are very remarkable upon this account: the first is that of Daniel, chap. ii. verse 40, 41, 42, to 46. where he first takes notice of the succession of several monarchies, until that of the Messiah. 2. The time in which the Messiah was to appear. I confess he does not determine the time very precisely, mentioning only the monarchy during which he was to be manifested; but to make amends for this, when he comes to explain the particulars of this prophecy, which before he had proposed in general terms, he doth not only point at the time of his appearance, but the very year of his death; and he does it with that exactness, that it is impossible to be mistaken about it.

See what he saith in the ixth chapter of his Revelations, verse 24, 25, 26, 27. *Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.* Verse 25. *Know therefore, and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks; the streets shall be built again, and the wall even in troublous times.* Verse 26. *And after the threescore and two weeks shall* MESSIAH *be cut off, but not for himself. And the people of the Prince that shall come, shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood; and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.* Verse 27. *And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week; and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease, and for the overspreading abomination he*

shall make it desolate, even until the consummation and that determined, shall be poured on the desolate.

For the understanding of this prophecy, which is so exact, and all the events it refers to so particularised, it is to be observed :

1. That by the weeks Daniel here speaks of, seven years are designed, according to the style of the law, Levit. xxv. 8. when it speaks of the year of jubilee; so that seventy weeks make out 490 years, which is acknowledged by the most learned amongst the Jews Jachiades, Abarbanel, and Menasseh Ben Israel.

2. That the Prophet, writing in *Chaldea*, followed the account of the Chaldean year, which consists of 360 days, as appears clearly from other passages of this book, where he resolves the years into days, without regarding the several days which in a just calculation, were to be intercalated.

3. That the Prophet expresses a certain epocha from whence the counting of these weeks is to begin, viz. an order to rebuild the temple, which cannot be applied to that of Cyrus, which was in a manner of none effect; nor to the edict of Darius, son of Hystaspes, which had regard only to the re-establishing of the temple; nor to that of Artaxerxes, given to Ezra in the seventh year of the reign of that Prince, because that contained only some particular privileges for the ministers of the temple : but to the edict which Artaxerxes granted to Nehemiah in the twentieth year of his reign, which contains a particular grant to rebuild the temple with its fortifications.

4. That God very distinctly marks that the last week was not to be immediately joined with the sixty-nine weeks, by saying that the Messiah was to be cut off after the term of seven weeks and sixty-two weeks expired, instead of saying that he should be cut off in the seventieth week.

5. That, according to this calculation, we find these three parts of this prophecy exactly accom-

plished. The first, which contains their building of the city, was performed before the end of the seven weeks; the second, concerning the cutting off of the Messiah, has been likewise fulfilled after the sixty-ninth week; Jesus Christ appearing in the 483d year after the twentieth of Artaxerxes, being crucified the nineteenth of Tiberius.

As for the last week it is distinguished by three characters God hath given it, because it was to be separated from the sixty-ninth week by a considerable interval, but yet was never a whit the less exactly accomplished. The first character is, that the people of the prince was to make peace with many, which agrees with the peace the Romans made with the Parthians, of which Tacitus makes mention, Annal. lib. 15. which peace was concluded just seven years before the destruction of Jerusalem; the second is, the ceasing of the daily sacrifice, which happened three years and a half after the peace made with the Parthians, as Josephus hath observed; the third is, the destruction of the Jews, which arrived exactly three years and a half after the ceasing of the daily sacrifice, and seven years after the said peace made with the Parthians.

I know that some famous men begin the weeks of Daniel from the second year of Darius Nothus, and make them to end with the destruction of the Jews, which happened in the year 490, accounting from the second year of the said Darius; and they conceive themselves obliged thereto, by an argument they believe invincible, because, from the second year of Darius Nothus to the thirty-second of Artaxerxes Mnemon, they find just forty-nine years, that is, the seven weeks designed by Daniel for rebuilding of the ruins, and fortifying of the city; and the rather, because Nehemiah returned to Artaxerxes in the thirty-second year of his reign, having finished that work, Nehemiah xiii. 6.

But this opinion cannot stand, for two reasons, which seem to be decisive: the first is, because they join that which God hath separated, viz. the death of the Messiah with the last week, which ends at the destruction of *Jerusalem;* the second is, that without thinking of it they deprive Jesus Christ of the glory of having determined the time of the destruction of the Jews, as if, instead of a prophecy about this event, Jesus Christ had only given the world an explication of a former prophecy.

Now these observations being supposed, as indeed they are matters of the greatest evidence, it necessarily follows, that the Messiah was to appear before the destruction of *Jerusalem* by the Romans. The time is set down so precisely by Daniel, as leaves no pretence to doubt of this truth. And indeed, though the Jews seem, after the time of our Saviour, to have adopted the opinion I mentioned before, and therefore carried the appearing of the Messiah to the end of the seventy weeks, viz. to the destruction of their temple, notwithstanding Daniel expressly tells us that the Jews were not to be destroyed till after the cutting off of the Messiah; the Jews I say, being convinced by the force of this argument, have owned that the Messiah was born about the time of the destruction of the second temple, but that he hath hid himself ever since.

The second oracle, concerning the time of the coming of the Messiah, is that of Haggai, which expressly tells us, that the Messiah was to appear during the second temple, which was begun to be built by the order of Cyrus, finished under Darius son of Hystaspes, and destroyed by Vespasian. The words of the Prophet are as follows, chap. ii. ver. 7, 8, 9. *And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory saith the Lord of Hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of Hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than that*

of the former, saith the Lord of Hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of Hosts. It is worth our noting, 1. That this oracle promises a very great change. 2. It describes the Messiah as the expectation of the Gentiles, suitable to the idea God had given of him to Abraham. 3. That it fixes the coming of the Messiah to the time of the second house, that is to say, of the temple built by Zorobabel. 4. It makes the glory of that house to depend upon its being honoured with the presence of the Messiah.

In short, if we would be convinced of this truth, we need only consider three things. The first is, that the Prophets Zechariah and Malachi do represent to us the coming of the Messiah as near at hand: Balaam had said, almost ten ages before, *I see him, but not nigh;* which intimated his coming to be then at a great distance. But Zechariah speaks thus concerning it, chap. iii. verse 8, 9, 10. *Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou and thy fellows that sit before thee, for they are men wondered at: behold, I will bring forth my servant the* BRANCH; *for behold, the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes; behold I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the Lord of Hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. In that day, saith the Lord of Hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour, under the vine and under the fig-tree.*

Malachi expresses himself, concerning the approaching coming of the Messiah, thus: (chap. iii. verse 1.) *Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple; even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in, behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts.*

One ought to observe two very considerable things in this prophecy: the first, that the Messiah was to

come suddenly; the second, that Malachi expressly points to us, that the appearing of the Messiah was to be during the second temple; the words of the prophecy distinctly expressing it.

And sure it is, that all who gave any credit to these oracles, did understand them so.

The first, both Jews and Gentiles looked for the Messiah during the second temple. We find a passage express to the purpose in Tacitus; and it was on this ground that Josephus gave the title of Messiah to Vespasian.

2. They expected him at the end of the seventy weeks, which was the third year after the death of Jesus Christ. This was the occasion of their being deluded by so many false Messiahs, about the time of our Saviour, and a little after.

3. They never despaired of his coming (taking the promise of the Messiah's coming to be conditional, when as indeed it was absolute) until they began to believe that the term set down by God himself was expired.

4. The reason of their cursing those that compute the times set down so distinctly and precisely by Daniel, was, because they found themselves disappointed in his calculation, finding that the time which Daniel had pointed at for the coming of the Messiah, seemed to be already expired.

5. It is but of late that they have tried to evade it, by maintaining that the temple will be built a third time, and that then the Messiah shall appear; but this evasion is unanswerably refuted: 1. Because Daniel assigns a certain term which is expired 1600 years since; 2. Because he expressly tells us, that the desolation of the temple was to be for ever, as will appear in the following chapters; and 3dly, Because Haggai in effect calls the temple of which he speaks, *The second or third house;* by which expression he so distinctly points out the second temple to us, that it

would be ridiculous to suppose it meant of a third temple, to be built 1700 years after the ruin of that of which he prophesied.

CHAP. XIV.

That the Messiah was to be born of a Virgin of the House of David.

HITHERTO we have seen that the Messiah was to be born of the posterity of Abraham by Isaac, of that of Isaac by Jacob, and of that of Jacob by Judah. This hath been sufficiently made out already.

I have also shewed from the oracle in the 1 Sam. chap. vii. that he was to be born of the posterity of David; and we find the same very particularly and fully set down in the lxxxixth Psalm.

The following prophets have expressed themselves to the same purpose; Isaiah xi. verse 1, 2, 3. and the prophet Jeremy hath pursued the same ideas, chap. xxiii. verse 5, 6; and chap. xxxiii. verse 15, 16, 17.

Neither do the prophets only distinguish the Messiah by his being born of a virgin, but also by determining that virgin to the house of David. Neither need I repeat here what I have already observed, that this is a truth, the grounds whereof God had laid down in his first promise, viz. *The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head:* where he makes mention of the seed of the woman only, without naming that of the man, the word of seed or posterity very evidently designing a man to be born of the woman, which is acknowledged by the Jews in another prophecy, and the same which the Apostle St. Paul takes notice of as a maxim generally owned by the doctors of the synagogue. It is also evident

that the word *woman* plainly denotes the sex of which this person was immediately to be born.

It was obvious to judge, that something miraculous was to attend the birth of the Messiah. We see Isaac born of a barren mother past the age of child-bearing; we find also something very singular at the birth of Sampson and Samuel: and it is well known that the promise of the Messiah was something far greater than the birth of these now mentioned, how illustrious soever they might be; and that therefore probably his birth was to be attended by a greater miracle. But because this was a thing wholly new, we ought to observe in what manner God did particularly foretell it.

The prophecy of Isaiah expresseth it thus, chap. vii. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17. *Moreover the Lord spake again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God, ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord. And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David, is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good: for before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings. The Lord shall bring upon thee, upon thy people, and upon thy father's house, days that have not come, from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah, even the king of Assyria.* Where we may observe,

1. That the promise here is made to a wicked king, but of the family of David, to whom the prophet particularly addresses himself.

2. That this prophecy was given at a juncture of time very capable of awakening their attention to it, at a time when the state of the Jews was reduced to the greatest extremity, and the house of David in particular in a very great consternation.

3. The prophecy was uttered by a very illustrious prophet, who was of the royal family.

4. It was sealed and confirmed with the prediction of the birth of a child, which came to pass accordingly.

5. It is set forth as a very extraordinary sign, instead of that which the wicked king refused to ask, when Isaiah offered it him, in the name of God.

I am not ignorant that the modern Jews deny that this character of being born of a virgin belongs to the Messiah: but it is an easy matter to confute them.

For, first, would it not have been ridiculous for the apostles to go about to apply this oracle to their Messiah, if it had not been a thing universally owned by the Jews, that this was the meaning of Isaiah's prophecy? Is it not evident that this character, so difficult to gain belief, would rather perplex than strengthen their proofs? And yet certain it is that St. Matthew has done so, chap. i. verse 23; as likewise St. Luke, chap. i. verse 31.

Justin Martyr observed, that the notion of this oracle, as we understand it, hath been entertained amongst the heathens, who built their fable of Perseus upon it, whom they pretend to have been born of a virgin.

3. It appears that all those laws which I mentioned in my reflections upon Exodus, and the following books, chap. xx. and which have relation to the distinct knowledge of the state of virginity, receive much light from this notion; and are, without it, altogether useless.

4. It is evident that the Jews did not dispute this character, till after they saw that the Christians ap-

plied it to Jesus Christ; and thereupon have fallen upon such childish fancies as may justly cover them with confusion.

But we shall be yet further satisfied hereof, if we add to all these just prejudices, only the following reflections on the terms the prophet makes use of.

The first is, that the seventy interpreters have, in translating this prophecy, made use of a word that signifies a virgin, and not a young woman, as the Jews have understood it since our Saviour's time. The first who rejected the interpretation of the Septuagint was Symmachus,* who lived in the second century as is observed by Justin Martyr and Tertullian, who for this reason accuse the Jews of having falsified the holy scripture.

The second is, That the Hebrew word expressly signifies such an one as, according to the law of virgins, was kept under lock and key from the eyes of men, according to the custom of the eastern nations, and especially of the Jews, which continues amongst them till this day.

The third is, That this word hath been taken by the Africans in the same signification, as St Jerome observes.

The fourth is, That the Prophet doth set forth this child-bearing as a prodigy and miracle altogether unheard of, and as a particular character, by which the house of David was to be strongly confirmed in the hope of seeing the accomplishment of the promise which God had made of settling an eternal kingdom upon it, which could not be accomplished but by means of the Messiah.

The fifth is, That though some Jews have applied this prophecy to king Hezekiah;† which yet to others of them seems very ridiculous, he being nine years of age when the prophecy was uttered by Isaiah, and

* In Dialog. cum Tryphon. Tertull. cont. Jud. cap. 9.
† Raschi in h. l.

themselves never making use of this evasion, except in their disputes against the Christians, and so on this occasion have dropped a confession which alone was sufficient to confound them; yet it hath been a thing so generally received amongst them, that this prophecy did respect the Messiah, that, after they had applied it to Hezekiah, one of their most famous doctors concludes,* that they ought to look for no Messiah, since the time of Hezekiah that prophecy having had its accomplishment in him; an opinion which those that succeeded him have rejected with the greatest abhorrence.

The sixth is, That the title of Immanuel, given to this son, whose birth is here promised, is represented to us, chap. viii. as the name of him who was lord of the land; which is a true representation of the heir promised to David, to whom David said, *O God, thy God hath anointed thee with the oil above thy fellows.* Psalm xlv. 7, 8.

The seventh is, That the prophet Isaiah having alleged and cited two witnesses, Uriah, the son of Shemaiah, a prophet, who was put to death by Jehoiakim, and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah; the former of which lived long after Ahaz, and the latter since the captivity, under Darius king of *Persia,* according to the account the Jews themselves give of them; he sufficiently hints, by this circumstance, that the prophecy concerning the birth of the Immanuel he speaks of, was to be fulfilled many ages after and not in that age whereof he prophesies.

* Gemar in Sanhed. Cap. Chelech.

CHAP. XV.

That the Messiah was to be born at Bethlehem of the Family of David, which at that Time was reduced to a private State.

GOD had not only pointed out the time in which the Messiah was to appear, with the miraculous manner and circumstances of his birth; but he had also named the family, the place, with the state and condition of the family in which he was to be born, as a triple character by which he might be known.

I say, first, That according to the Divine oracles, the Messiah was to be born of the family of David, as will appear if we consider the following oracles.

1. God expressly promiseth as much to David, 2 Sam. chap. vii. a place I have quoted before, which proves that the Messiah was to be born of the family of David.

2. It appeareth that David believed this himself, from Psalm cxxxii. verse 11—18. *The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David; he will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne.* And after having said, verse 12. *That if his children would keep his covenant, that their children also should sit upon his throne for evermore;* and this, *because* (verse 13 and 14) *the Lord had chosen Zion, and desired it for his habitation, &c.* and promised, verse 15, that he would *abundantly bless her provision, and satisfy her poor with bread;* that he would, verse 16, *clothe her priests with salvation, and make her saints shout for joy;* he subjoins, verse 17 and 18, *There I will make the horn of David to bud; I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed. His enemies I will clothe with shame; but upon himself shall his crown flourish.* It is very evident, that by this *horn of*

David is to be meant a king, the Messiah, whom he distinguishes by that expression from all the rest of David's children. And Zachariah, in his song of praise, Luke i. verse 69. applying it to our Saviour, puts the matter out of all doubt.

3. Hence it was the Prophets took occasion to give to the Messiah the name of David. So Ezek. xxxiv. verse 23, 24. *And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it.*

4. The Jews are, and have always been, firm in this persuasion, grounded on the foresaid and other like places of Scripture, which they constantly refer to the Messiah.

I say, in the second place, That the Divine oracles expressly point out *Bethlehem* for the birth-place of the Messiah. Micah, chap. v. verse 2. *But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been of old, from the days of eternity.*

The Jews acknowledge that this oracle speaks of the Messiah; and indeed the Prophet, distinguishing by *Bethlehem*, adding the word *Ephratah* (whence the family of David was), from that *Bethlehem* which belonged to another tribe, makes it apparent that nothing could be spoken more distinctly to determine the birth-place of the Messiah. Besides, we find that all the Jewish Rabbies and Priests agree in this, That the Messiah was to be born at *Bethlehem*, when, being consulted by Herod about this matter, they declared this to be their sense, grounded upon the forementioned place of Micah, Matthew ii. verse 4—6.

In the third place, it appears that the Messiah was to be born in an abject, contemptible, and weak condition, and very different from the greatness of the kings of *Judah*. Indeed, should we only have our eye on 2 Sam. chap. vii. and Psalm cxxxii. it would be natural enough to think the contrary: but Micah's oracle sufficiently refutes them; for how great things soever the Prophet there speaks of the Messiah, whether as to his divine nature, by declaring that his *goings forth were from the days of eternity*, or to the majesty and glory of his empire, yet however he gives us a different idea, inducing us to conceive of him, as of one that was to be born in the state of a private person; for why else is his birth determined, not to *Zion*, which was the place and seat of the empire of *Judah*, but to *Bethlehem*, a town where the family of David lived, whilst they were private persons, except for this cause, to make us conceive that the Messiah was not to be born in that place where the family of David possessed the empire, but in a condition far distant from the glory of kings, and in a place where the house of David was contemptible, and of very small esteem.

The same is hinted to us by Isaiah, in his xith chapter, v. 1. where he calls the Messiah a rod, or shoot of the stem of Jesse. Now Jesse was not king, but a private person. And on the same account it is that the Prophet describes him, chap. liii. as having *no form or comeliness*.

The Prophet Zachary also, chap. ix. verse 9. represents him, not as a king sitting on the throne in *Zion*, but as riding to *Jerusalem* on an ass; and he gives him the title of *Lowly*, which signifies as well a mean condition, as the virtue of humility.

But, in short, this is very considerable: 1. That those who acknowledged Jesus to be the Messiah, thought they had the greatest reason so to do, because they acknowledged him to be the son of David:

2. That those who denied him that title, thought themselves sufficiently justified in so doing, by esteeming him a Nazarene; as concluding he could not be the son of David, if he were born at *Nazareth*, as they supposed.

3. The Evangelists precisely tell us, that Christ was born at *Bethlehem*, of the lineage of David, reduced to a very obscure condition; and so making this one of the chief characters which spoke him to be the Messiah.

CHAP. XVI.

That the Messiah was to work great Miracles, for establishing of his Mission, and of the Truth of his Doctrine.

HERE is another character which is very particular, and whereby the Messiah might be certainly known, viz. That he was to work great miracles for the confirmation of his mission and of his doctrine.

This appears, as I have already hinted, 1. From the conformity which the Messiah was to have to Moses, in being the founder of a new religious society, and in proposing a new doctrine to men; upon which account there lay upon him the same obligation as upon Moses, to support his authority by miracles, that even in this he might not be inferior to him.

2. One may gather this also from the title of Prophet, and great Prophet, which are applicable to the Messiah; it being difficult to conceive, that God, who vouchsafed the glory of doing miracles to most of the Prophets, though they were barely sent to foretell the coming of the Messiah, and to give an account of him, should have denied the same glory

and the same power to the Messiah himself, of whom all the Prophets were but the forerunners.

Besides, it is easy to judge, from the mean and contemptible state wherein the Messiah was to appear, that this glory of doing miracles was of absolute necessity, to give him authority and respect; for, since he was to be born in an obscure condition, and not in royal grandeur, it is evident that the gift of miracles was needful to make him known, and counterbalance that low and opprobrious condition in which he was to appear in the world.

But this particularly appears from an express oracle which God gave upon this very subject, in Isaiah xxxv. verse 3—6. *Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not; behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.* Which oracle very fully expresses the power of miracles wherewith our Saviour was to be dignified, in curing all manner of diseases, of which the Prophet hath named some only, to give us a specimen of the rest; and it seems as if the Prophet had chosen these four sorts before all others, because throughout the whole Scripture we do not find that ever any Prophet did the like, that so the character of the Messiah might be particular in his miracles too.

It is also worth our noting, in giving a character of the Messiah, first, That even those who rejected Jesus Christ, yet did at the same time suppose that the Messiah, when he came, was to work miracles. Therefore it is that we hear some of them saying to Christ, *What sign dost thou?* and others maintain

ing that Moses had wrought greater wonders than Jesus Christ, in giving them bread from heaven, and feeding them miraculously for the space of forty years; whilst others affirmed, that none could work greater wonders than he wrought: *When the Messiah shall come, will he do greater wonders than this man?*

Secondly, one ought to observe that Jesus Christ alleges this oracle of the Prophet Isaiah, taking it for granted that the accomplishment thereof was most visibly evident in the miracles which he wrought, as appears from the answer he gave to the messengers of John the Baptist.

Thirdly, it is also observable, That those who were willing to flatter the vanity of the emperor Vespasian (whom Josephus endeavoured to raise to a belief that he was the Messiah, because he had been proclaimed in the east, applying to that purpose the words of Micah, misapplied, chap. v. verse 2. *Whose goings forth are from the east*) were not wanting to attribute to him the glory of doing miracles, and such as Isaiah ascribes to the Messiah, by attributing to him the cure of one that was blind, and another that was lame at *Alexandria*. He that would know the particulars, may consult Tacitus's history.

And, last of all, we ought to observe, That the Jews do not only agree that this oracle of Isaiah refers to the Messiah; but they also still propose the power of working miracles, as a character which would render the Messiah very illustrious, and certainly known.

CHAP. XVII.

That the Messiah was to be an illustrious Prophet.

THIS truth I have already asserted in the Reflections I made on the prophecy of Moses, Deut. xviii. But one ought to explain this character of the Messiah more particularly, God having been pleased further to illustrate the oracle of Moses.

First, then, we say that the word Messiah implies anointing, which was common to kings, prophets, and priests; and since David's time, we find nothing more common than this title in the books of the Old Testament: where we may observe that Moses was dignified with this gift of prophecy; and that Samuel communicated the same to Saul and David, when he anointed them to be kings. Yea, the Jews to this day are of opinion, that Elias the Prophet shall anoint the Messiah; that is, initiate him in his prophetical, as well as his royal function.

Secondly, God more precisely signifies this, Isai. xi. verses 1, 2, and 3, where he declares he would communicate all the necessary gifts of the prophetical function to the Messiah. *There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord. So that he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears.*

These words need no commentary; for the *Jews* refer them constantly to the Messiah; and they plainly import that he was to be a great Prophet, forasmuch as all the characters which are there given to the Spirit which was to rest upon the Messiah, are the same which in the Old Testament we find attri-

buted to the Prophets, and may easily be taken notice of in the history of the Prophets, especially of David and Solomon.

And much to the same purpose is that passage, Isai. xlii. verses 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7. *Behold my Servant whom I uphold, mine Elect in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my Spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoaking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail, nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law. Thus saith God the Lord, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath to the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein: I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house.* In which oracle one ought to take notice particularly of those things which the Jews apply to the Messiah.

1. That God proposes the gifts of the spirit, which he bestowed upon him as an effect of his love, and the choice he had made of him.

2. That the Messiah was to make use of the same, as rules for reforming the country, and propounding God's covenant to the Gentiles; which clearly suppose the necessity of the gift of prophecy to qualify him for such great undertakings.

3. That, contrary to the thundering character which distinguished the rest of the Prophets, who were as so many public censors, the Messiah was to

speak with all meekness and sweetness to the nations which should receive his preaching.

One sees that Isaiah repeats the same ideas, chap. lxi. verses 1—7. *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek: he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified. And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations. And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks; and the sons of the alien shall be your ploughmen, and your vine dressers. But ye shall be named the Priests of the Lord; men shall call you the Ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves. For your shame ye shall have double, and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess the double; everlasting joy shall be upon them.*

In short, he represents, in this and the former oracle, the Gentiles as a people being in darkness, and in the misery of a prison; from whence we may easily infer, first, That the Messiah was to be a Prophet, how vile and abject soever that character may appear in the eyes of the world, as I have shewed that it was, where I spake of the Prophets in general; secondly, That he was to discharge these functions during the whole course of his life, and that it was to be his chief employment here upon earth.

David had before signified, Psalm xxii. verse 22, that the Messiah was to *declare the name of God unto his brethren*, viz. the Jews, by exercising his prophetical function in *Judea;* but the Holy Spirit did something more, when he seemed to point out *Galilee* as the place where this sacred Doctor was chiefly to fix his abode.

This is in effect insinuated, when God tells us that he was to begin his ministerial functions in the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulon. Isai. ix. verses 1—3. *Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulon, and the land of Naphtali, and afterwards did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan in Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. Thou hast multiplied the nation, thou hast increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.*

I shall afterwards take notice, That the time of the Messiah was to be distinguished by an incredible abundance of spiritual gifts: and so this shall suffice at present to prove that the Messiah was to be a very great Prophet.

CHAP. XVIII.

That the Messiah was to propound a new Covenant from God with all Men.

THIS is a truth which is easily gathered: 1. Because all nations, before they could be made partakers of the blessing of God by the Messiah (according to the promise made to Abraham), were first to be received

into the covenant; 2. From the nature of that covenant itself, of which Moses was the mediator, the end of which was, to separate the Jews from other nations, some of which were not capable of being received amongst them, till after several generations, whereas they were to be made partakers of this blessing by the Messiah; 3. Because in effect all the ceremonial law was only added to the moral, as it were, contrary to God's principal intention, and only upon occasion of the Jews worshipping the golden calf, as St. Paul observes in the third chapter of his epistle to the Galatians.*

Besides, it appears that God at divers times had given sufficient hints concerning this.

1. He had proposed a new priesthood of the Messiah, which was to abolish the Levitical priesthood; and this is the more remarkable, forasmuch as David, who pronounced that oracle, Psalm cx. was he who first formed the design of building the temple, to which all the Levitical service was annexed.

2. We find him rejecting in some sort the Levitical ministry, after he had despised it in comparison of the spiritual worship. Psalm xl. verse 6. *Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required.* And Psalm l. verses 8—10. *I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt-offerings, which have been continually before me. I will take no bullocks out of thine house, nor he-goats out of thy folds; for every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.* And Psalm li. verse 17, he tells us that *the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;* in opposition to the sacrifices which the law prescribed, and to signify their imperfection; the law having appointed none for the expiation of murder or adultery.

* Gal. iii. 19.

Isaiah follows David, chap. i. verses 11—15. *To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord. I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts: and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When you come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hands to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me: the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons, and your appointed feasts, my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when you spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.* And Jeremiah speaks much to the same purpose, chap. vii. verses 21—23.

But besides, God directly promiseth this new covenant by Isaiah, chap. xlii. verses 6, 7. *I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness from the prison-house.*

It is natural to observe, that in this place, where God speaks of the Messiah, as the Jews themselves confess, he expressly declares two things: 1. That the Messiah should be a covenant of the people, that is, that he should mediate a covenant between God and the people; 2. That the fruit of this covenant was to extend to the Gentiles, which plainly implies that it was not the old covenant, forasmuch as from it several were excluded.

The same covenant is also mentioned, chap. xlix. verses 8, 9. *Thus saith the Lord, in an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and*

give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages. That thou mayst say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places.

He pursues the same notion, chap. lv. verses 3, 4. *Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, the sure mercies of David. Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.* Than which, nothing can be more particular.

And to the same purpose he speaks, chap. lxi. verses 8, 9. *For I the Lord love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt-offering; and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people; all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed.*

It is as clear as the day, that God in these oracles promiseth an irrevocable covenant, because he calls it an everlasting covenant in opposition to the former. He takes notice also in the same book, that the said covenant was to be propounded in the midst of the nations, and that then that blessing of God should be known according to the ancient oracles, which was promised universally to all nations.

This is that which God more particularly explains afterwards, by the voice and pen of a Prophet who was of the order of Priests, thereby to prevent all sorts of exceptions.

Jeremiah in effect speaks to the same purpose, chap. xxxi. verses 31—36. *Behold, the day is come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made*

with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt (which my covenant they break, although I were a husband to them, saith the Lord); but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their heart; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; the Lord of Hosts is his name. If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever.

Nothing can be desired more particular than this oracle. 1. It tells us that God would make a new covenant with his people, which supposes an abolishing of the former; 2. That this covenant was not to be like the foregoing; 3. That the old covenant had been made vain, and had been broken by those with whom it was made; 4. That this covenant was to be made *after those days*, that is, in the time of the Messiah; 5. That this new covenant was not to be engraven in tables of stone, but in their hearts; 6. That in the same covenant full remission of sin is promised.

The same thing is also expressed, chap. xxxii. verse 40. *And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me.* And, chap. l. v. 5. *They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves*

to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, that shall not be forgotten.

To this purpose also Ezekiel, who himself was a Priest, speaks of a religious worship extended to all nations, and of a new covenant which God was to make with them, chap. xvi. verses 60—62. *Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant. Then thou shalt remember thy ways, and be ashamed, when thou shalt receive thy sisters, thy elder and thy younger: and I will give them unto thee for daughters, but not by thy covenant. And I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord.*

Here is, first, a covenant differing from the former; 2. A covenant wherein other nations were to be included, clearly intimated by the *elder* and *younger sisters* of the synagogue; 3. A covenant whereby the Gentiles were to enjoy the same privileges with the Jews, and be incorporated with them.

Malachi follows the steps of these Prophets, when he calls the Messiah *the Angel of the covenant*, chap. iii. ver. 1. *Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple; even the messenger (Angel) of the covenant, whom ye delight in, behold he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts.* I know very well that the Jews apply these words to Elias, whose ministry, as they pretend, was to consist in leading the Jews to repentance. But if we read the text with attention, we shall find two messengers mentioned; the first, to prepare the way of the Messiah; and the other is the Messiah himself, who is called the *Angel of the covenant*, as being sent of God to make a new covenant with men.

CHAP. XIX.

That the Jews, by a dreadful Effect of their Blindness, were to reject the Messiah.

THIS is a very peculiar mark, which will guide us surely to the knowledge of the Messiah. We find the Jews at this day very ready to follow every one that usurps that august title, and to take him for the only true Messiah that was promised them; which is no other than what was infallibly to come to pass.

Neither will this much surprise us, if we consider, 1. That this people, on divers occasions, have given very strange instances of a prodigious blindness: we see them reject Moses, notwithstanding God had authorized his call by great and avowed miracles; yea, we find them rejecting David also, whom God had so signally appointed to be their king, and the father of the Messiah, of whom we hear these prophecies.

2. That God upbraids them with this blindness by his Prophets, as a sin to which they were peculiarly inclined; as appears from Psalm lxix. verse 23—28. *Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not; and make their loins continually to shake. Pour out thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them. Let their habitation be desolate, and let none dwell in their tents. For they persecute him whom thou hast smitten, and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded. Add iniquity to iniquity; and let them not come into thy righteousness. Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous.*

One sees the same thing in Isaiah, chap. vi. verse 9—12, where the Spirit of God foretells that the Jews should shut their eyes against the most evident and convincing proofs imaginable. *Go*, saith the

Lord to the Prophet, *and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate: and the Lord have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land.*

Nothing can be imagined more particular than this oracle concerning the Jews resisting the Prophet, which God expresses in terms very usual amongst the Prophets; as if Isaiah, who was only the foreteller of their being hardened, should himself be the cause of it.

The Prophet Hosea describes the very same complaints of God against the Jews for their blindness and ignorance, for which he denounces their destruction. Hosea iv. verse 1—6. *Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel; for the Lord has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood. Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away. Yet let no man strive or reprove another; for thy people are as they that strive with the Priest. Therefore shalt thou fall in the day, and the Prophet also shall fall with thee in the night, and I will destroy thy mother. My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no Priest to me; seeing*

thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.

The Prophet Jeremy speaks to the same purpose, chap. v. verse 21—23. *Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes, and see not; which have ears and hear not. Fear ye not me, saith the Lord? Will ye not tremble at my presence, who have placed the sand for the bound of the sea, by a perpetual decree that it cannot pass it; and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it? But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone.* And he reiterates the same, chap. viii. verse 7. *The stork in the heavens knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming: but my people know not the judgment of the Lord.*

Ezekiel prosecutes the same matter, chap. ii. verse 5 and 8, calling the Jews a rebellious house. And chap. xii. verse 1 and 2, he saith, *The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, who have eyes to see, and see not, they have ears to hear, and hear not, for they are a rebellious house.*

Neither do the Prophets only represent to us in general the blindness of the Jews upon several occasions; but they also very particularly inform us, that he who was the most considerable person of their state, and the great Minister of God, should be notwithstanding rejected by them.

And here, first, It is worth our noting, that Moses threatens the worst of calamities to those who should refuse to hear the great Prophet, like unto him whom God was to raise to his people, Deut. xviii. verse 18.

Secondly, David, Psalm cxviii. verse 22, expresses this in these words, *The stone which the builders refused, is become the head of the corner.* From

which words it is evident, 1. That the Messiah was to be rejected; 2. That he was to be rejected by those who were entrusted with the care of building the house; 3. That this was to be before he should be acknowledged the great Minister of heaven.

God speaks the same thing by Isaiah, chap. xxviii. verse 16. *Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.* Which place is to be understood of the Messiah, by the confession of the Jews themselves.

Daniel follows the same notion, chap. ii. verse 34, 35. *Thou sawest till a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet, and brake them to pieces: and the stone became a great mountain, and filled the earth.*

On all which prophecies we may make these remarks: 1. That Jesus Christ quotes most of them, as such, which by the Jews themselves were owned to refer to the Messiah. Thus, Matt. xxi. verse 42, he saith, *Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner.* And St. Peter, Acts iv. verse 11. *This is the stone which was set at nought by you builders, which is become the head of the corner.* St. Paul makes the same allusion, Ephes. ii. verse 20. *And are built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.* And 1 Cor. iii. verse 11. *For other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.* And when Jesus Christ himself saith to Peter, Matt. xvi. verse 18. *Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church,* &c. he alludes to that of Daniel; *Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors, and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for*

them: and the stone which smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.

Our Saviour applies also to the Jews those prophecies which foretell their being offended at the Ministers of heaven; in particular that of Isaiah, chap. vi. verse 9. *Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not, and see ye indeed, but perceive not.*

2. We may observe that the Jews of old applied those prophecies (as the Apostles did) to the hardening of their own nation; as appears from that of St. Paul, Rom. x. verse 21. *But to Israel he saith, All the day long have I stretched forth my hand unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.*

3. We must take notice, that the same temper which was in the ancient Jews, who rejected the Prophets, was found in those who lived at the time of our Saviour; and for this, we need only to read the description which Josephus, de Bello Judaico, lib. vii. cap. 3. gives of them, where he compares them with the Sodomites, which is the comparison Isaiah makes, chap. i. verse 10.

And last of all, we may take notice, That Josephus acknowledges that this blindness of the Jews was the cause of the final destruction of *Jerusalem*, which was to succeed the death of the Messiah, according to the express oracle of Daniel, chap. ix. verse 26.

CHAP. XX.

That the Messiah was to die; and an Account of the several Circumstances of his Death.

To be convinced of this truth, we need only prove that what is set down in Psalm xxii. Isaiah liii. Daniel ix. and Zachariah xiii. and other prophetical pas-

sages of holy Scripture, is to be understood of the Messiah; and the reading of them alone is sufficient to satisfy the meanest capacity, that the person they point at was to lose his life by violence, with several very infamous circumstances.

Now it is certain that both ancient and modern Jews interpret these places of the Messiah; and it is as evident that the Apostles understood them so; and therefore all along applied them to Jesus Christ, following therein the known explications of the Rabbies of their own nation.

It is plain also, that the death and suffering of our Saviour would have proved a more efficacious argument to refute the Apostles, than all the miracles of Jesus Christ could have been to establish their doctrine, if the prophetical writings had not so precisely determined his sufferings and death, with the several circumstances of them.

It is also to be noted, that the prophecies referring to the death of the Messiah are generally interwoven with ideas which point to other prophetical passages avowedly owned by the Jews to have relation to the Messiah. Thus, if we compare Psalm xxii. verse 28, with Psalm lxxii. verse 8, 9, we shall find the same idea set forth in them both.

And because this character was to be the most proper and distinguishing note of the Messiah, forasmuch as none with pleasure do precipitate themselves into death, or are masters of the manner and circumstances of it, therefore God caused the same to be expressed by the Prophets with the greatest plainness and exactness possible.

It cannot be denied but that some of the Prophets have been very cruelly persecuted, and that some of them have died in the midst of torments: but concerning the death of Christ we have many more particulars, viz.

1. That he was to be forsaken by his own friends, Psalm xxii. verse 11. *Be not far from me, for*

trouble is near; for there is none to help. And Psalm lxix. verse 11. *I made sackcloth also my garment, and I became a proverb to them.* And, verse 20. *Reproach has broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness; and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.*

2. That he was to be exposed to all manner of reproachful usage. Psalm xxii. verse 6—8. *But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me, laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted in the Lord that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.* And Psalm lxix. verse 1—4. *Save me, O God, for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing; I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me. I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried: mine eyes fail, while I wait for my God. They that hate me without cause are more than the hairs of my head; they that would destroy me, being my enemies wrongfully, are mighty.*

The same is represented to us, Isaiah liii. verse 4, 5. *Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him: and with his stripes we are healed.*

3. They take notice that he should be beaten and abused, as appears from Isaiah liii. verse 3—8. *He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid, as it were, our faces from him: he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, he was wounded for our transgressions,* &c. *The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened*

not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

4. They declare that he should be sold. Zech. ii. verse 12, *and* 13. *And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear: so they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter; a goodly price that I was prized at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter, in the house of the Lord.*

5. They make mention of his being condemned by the Jews and Heathens. Psalm ii. verse 2. *The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his anointed.* And Psalm xxii. verse 16. *For dogs have compassed me, the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me; they pierced my hands and my feet.* And Psalm lxix. verse 12. *They that sit in the gate speak against me, and I was the song of the drunkards.* And Isaiah liii. verse 8. *He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off from the land of the living, for the transgression of my people was he stricken.*

6. They specify his death on the cross. Psalm xxii. verse 16. *They pierced my hands and my feet.* And Zech. xii. verse 10. *And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced.*

7. They intimate his dying between thieves. Isaiah liii. verse 12. *Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he has poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with transgressors.*

8. They take notice of his being mocked before his death. Psalm xxii. verse 6—8. *But I am a*

worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me, laugh me to scorn; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, &c. And Psalm lxix. verse 17—19. *Hide not thy face from thy servant, for I am in trouble; hear me speedily. Draw nigh unto my soul, and redeem it: deliver me because of mine enemies. Thou hast known my reproach, my shame, and my dishonour: mine adversaries are all before thee.*

9. That they who put him to death should divide his garments. Psalm xxii. verse 18. *They part my garments amongst them, and cast lots upon my vesture.*

10. That the Messiah should complain that God had forsaken him in the hands of his enemies. Psalm xxii. verse 1, 2. *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the day time, and thou hearest not; and in the night season am not silent.*

11. That they would give him vinegar and gall to drink. Psalm lxix. verse 21. *They gave me also gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.*

12. They set before our eyes the manner of his death on the cross. Psalm xxii. verse 14—17. *I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws: and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me, the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me; they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me.* And Isaiah liii. verse 7—9.

13. That not one of his bones should be broken. Psalm xxxiv. verse 20. *He keepeth all his bones; not one of them is broken.*

14. That he was to be buried in the sepulchre of a rich man. Isaiah liii. verse 9. *He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was deceit found in his mouth.*

We may make these following reflections on the foregoing oracles.

1. That here are many very different events and circumstances, all meeting in the same end.

2. That many of these passages that might be questioned whether they were particularly applicable to the Messiah, are joined with such hints as can no way agree with the Prophets that uttered them. Thus we find that in the xxiid Psalm there are many expressions which cannot be applied to David.

3. That most of these prophecies are avowedly attributed to the Messiah by the most ancient authors of the Synagogue. And the modern Jews themselves refer them to some that suffered a violent death, as to Rabbi Akiba, who died in the second century.

4. That the Apostles unanimously applied them to Jesus Christ, the true Messiah, following therein the general consent of their nation.

CHAP. XXI.

That the Messiah was soon after to rise again.

FORASMUCH as death entered into the world by sin, and that the Messiah was to take it away, we may easily conceive, that if the Messiah were, according to the Divine disposal, to submit to death, he could not long continue subject to it. He who was to restore life to those who were dead, could never be confined and imprisoned in a grave; and he who was superior to Enoch and Elias, who ascended into hea-

ven, because he alone was exalted to the right hand of God, to reign there for ever, as the prophecies concerning him assure us, ought certainly to leave his sepulchre by a glorious resurrection.

And this we are positively assured of by the ancient oracles. Psalm xvi. verse 10, 11. *Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew the path of life; in thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.* And to assure us that these and the like passages are applicable to none but the Messiah, we find in the same Psalms expressions too high to be applied to the authors themselves: as for example, Psalm xxx. verse 1---3. *I will extol thee, O Lord, for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me. O Lord, my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me. O Lord, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave, thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.* And Psalm xli. 8---10. *An evil disease, say they, cleaveth fast unto him; and now that he lieth, he shall rise up no more. Yea, mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lift up his heel against me. But thou O Lord, be merciful unto me, and raise me up, that I may requite them.* And Psalm xlix. verse 15. *But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, for he shall receive me.* Psalm lvi. 11---13. *In God have I put my trust, I will not be afraid what man can do unto me. Thy vows are upon me, O God, I will render praise unto thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death,* &c. Psalm lxxii. verse 20. *Thou who hast shewed me great and sore troubles, shall quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth.* Psalm cxliii. ver. 11, 12. *Quicken me, O Lord, for thy name's sake, for thy righteousness sake bring my soul out of trouble: and of thy mercy cut*

off mine enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul, for I am thy servant.

Hosea speaks to the some purpose, chap. xiii. verse 14. *I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.*

Isaiah expresses the very same thing, chap. xxv. verse 8. *He will swallow up death in victory, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take from off all the earth; for the Lord hath spoken it.* And yet more expressly chap. liii. verse 10, 11. *Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.*

For the better understanding of which passages, we are to observe, 1. That the Messiah, in many or most of them, compriseth all believers with himself, according to that maxim of the Jews, who attribute to the Messiah, the greatest of all the Prophets, whatsoever God vouchsafed to any one of the Prophets; and according to this principle Jesus Christ speaks, Matt. xii. verse 39, 40. *An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the Prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*

2. That upon this account the Messiah is represented to us, not as rising again alone, but as mak-

ing all his brethren partakers of the same glory; which makes the Prophets speak of him, not as a single person, but in common with others, who by him are made possessors of the same advantages.

3. That most of these texts are quoted by the Apostles, who in so doing followed the sense of the whole nation, as appears from Acts ii. verse 24—29. *Whom God hath raised, having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is at my right hand, that I should not be moved. Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad: moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life: thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the Patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.* And Acts xiii. 30—37. *But God raised him from the dead. And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people. And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Wherefore he saith also in another Psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. For David, after he had served his own generation, by the will of God fell asleep, and was*

gathered to his fathers, and saw corruption. But he whom God raised again, saw no corruption.

In like manner we find St. Paul alluding to that of Hosea xiii. verse 14. in 1 Cor. xv. verse 55. *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?*

CHAP. XXII.

That the Messiah was to ascend into Heaven, and send down from thence the miraculous Gifts of Prophecy, Languages, &c.

THIS was a thing which might rationally enough be expected;* for the Messiah being to resemble Moses, who had not only the gifts of the Holy Spirit himself, but also in a manner communicated the same to the heads of the congregation of Israel, it was reasonable to infer, that the Messiah was to receive much more eminent gifts, and to communicate them to far greater numbers.

But besides this, God had expressly promised it by David, Psalm cx. verse 1, 2. where he represents the Messiah sitting at the right hand of God. *The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.*

It is worth our noting, that Daniel represents to us the same notion, where he speaks of the kingdom of the Messiah, chap. vii. verse 13, 14. *I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near*

* Deut. xviii. 18.

before him. And there was given him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. Where doth God dwell, unless in heaven?

David expresses himself in terms which import something too great to be applied to the symbolical ark of the covenant, Psalm xxiv. verse 7—9. *Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle,* &c.

He speaks further of the glorious kingdom of the Messiah, Psalm xlv. verse 5---7. *Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee. Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness; therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.* It is evident that David addresses himself there to the Messiah, because he styles him a God anointed above his fellows. And he pursues the same idea, Psalm lxviii. verse 18. *Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men, yea for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell amongst them.* Nothing can be imagined more express than these words, which lively represent to us the ascension of the Messiah, and the pouring forth of prophetical gifts, to bring the Heathens to the service of God.

Isaiah speaks the same, chap. xliv. verse 18. *For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring.* The waters here spoken of, according to

the ordinary style of the Prophets, are nothing else but the graces of God's Spirit.

Joel expresses himself very plainly in this matter, chap. ii. verse 28---32. *And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also upon the servants, and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be delivered: for in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.*

Nothing can be conceived more particular than this oracle, concerning the effusion of the prophetical gifts upon the servants of the Messiah, after his ascension. For, 1. He clearly hints at the several ways of prophecy which shall be bestowed upon the subjects of the Messiah; 2. That this great event was to be before the destruction of *Jerusalem*, which St. Peter foretels as a thing at the door, Acts ii. verse 30—32. After he had shewed that the wonderful effusion of the Spirit at Pentecost was a literal accomplishing of the prophecy of Joel, he adds, *Therefore being a Prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne: he seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus has God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.*

Ezekiel goes on with the same views with Joel, chap. xxxvi. verse 26, 27. *A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.* And chap. xxxix. verse 29. *Neither will I hide my face any more from them; for I have poured out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God.*

And Zechariah agrees with both the foregoing Prophets, chap. xii. verse 10. *And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.*

It is obvious to make these following observations upon these oracles.

1. That the Messiah was to be raised above the reach of any of his enemies.

2. That he was to ascend to heaven, and to be instated there in glory, in order to his being dignified and glorified above all nations.

3. That he was from thence to send down prophetical graces plentifully, which made his entrance into heaven a kind of triumph.

4. That this great event was to precede the destruction of *Jerusalem*, to which the Prophet Joel in the fore-cited place seems to allude. The Messiah was to form a new society, which was to be regulated, not by the laws given on mount *Sinai*, but by those which were to be publised from mount *Zion*.

CHAP. XXIII.

That the Gentiles in the Time of the Messiah were to be called to the Knowledge of the true God.

THIS article being one of the most important and most visible characters of the times of the Messiah, and also the great effect of this ministry, we see that God had a particular care to divulge the same by a multitude of prophetical representations of it.

For not only had he declared that the *seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head;** that is, the works of the Devil. And we cannot deny, but that the errors and idolatries of the Gentiles, and their vices which arise from thence, were the fruits of sin, which this unhappy spirit brought into the world. It was not only foretold that God would *persuade Japhet to dwell in the tents of Sem,*† by uniting the posterities both those Patriarchs in one and the same religion. Not only had he signified that the Messiah should reign over the children of Seth, that is, over all the posterity of Noah, the offspring of Cham not excepted; not only had he foretold that all nations, kindreds and families, should be blessed in the Messiah.§

But God went much farther afterwards; for, as the light of the revelation increased, so the same was declared more distinctly. For,

1. The Patriarch Jacob tells that the Messiah should be the desire and expectation of all nations. Gen. xlix. verse 10. *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet,*

* Gen. iii. 15. † Gen ix. 27.
§ Gen. xii. & ch. xviii. & xxii.

until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.

2. Moses threatens the Jews, that if they despised the law of God, strangers, that is, Gentiles, should be preferred before them. Deut. xxviii. verse 43. *The stranger that is within thee shall get above thee very high; and thou shalt come down very low.* The same Prophet menaceth them from God, that he would stir up their jealousy, calling a foolish people to his service and worship. Deut. xxxii. verse 21. *They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God, they have provoked me to anger with their vanities; and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people, I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.* Nothing can be said more express and particular than these last words of that great lawgiver and founder of the state of the Jews.

3. David sets forth the empire of the Messiah, as that which was to reach over all the earth. Psalm ii. verse 8. *Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.* And Psalm xxii. verse 27, 28, 29, 30. *All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord; and all the kingdoms of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the Lord's, and he is Govenor amongst the nations. All they that be fat upon the earth, shall eat and worship; all they that go down to the dust, shall bow before him. A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.* Psalm lxxii. verse 8, 9, 10, 11. *He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents, the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him, all nations shall*

serve him. Which prophecy is the more remarkable, because the promise made to Abraham is there repeated in so many words, viz. *That all nations of the earth should be blessed in the Messiah.* Psalm cii. verse 15. *So the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth thy glory.* And Psalm cx. verse 2. *The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.* One ought to transcribe almost the whole book of Psalms, to take notice of all the passages which are to this purpose.

The Prophet Hosea declares in general terms, That it was not an impossible thing for those who had been God's people, to cease to be so; or for those that were not his people, to become his people; chap. i. verse 10. *Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.*

Isaiah mentions this so often, and in such an emphatical manner that it seems to be the main thing he drives at in all his writings. Chap. ii. verse 2, 3. he speaks thus: *And it shall come to pass, in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.* And chap. xi. verse 10. *In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people, to it shall the Gentiles seek.* And, chap. xviii. verse 7, he makes a manifest allusion to the *expectation of all nations.* In chap. xlii. verse 1—4. he repeats the

same thing: *Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth; I will put my Spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law,* Chap. lv. verse 4, 5. *Behold I have given thee for a witness of the people, a leader and a commander to the people. Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee, because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel, for he hath glorified thee.* But one sees these truths in their greatest lustre in the lxth chap. of his prophecies, verse 3—5. *The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all that gather themselves together, they come to thee; thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see and shine, and thine heart shall fear and be enlarged, because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.* And chap. lxii. verse 2. *The Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name.* And verse 11, 12. *Behold, the Lord hath proclaimed unto the ends of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work is before him. And they shall call them the holy people, the redeemed of the Lord. And thou shalt be called Sought out, A City not forsaken.* And chap. lxv. verse 1. *I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name.* And chap. lxvi. verse

18. *It shall come to pass, that I will gather all nations and tongues, and they shall come and see my glory.*

Amos (who was contemporary with Isaiah) speaks the same thing, chap. ix. verse 11, 12. *In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David which is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it, as in the days of old. That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the Lord which doth this.*

The Prophet Micah also follows the Prophet Isaiah step by step. Mich. iv. verse 1—3. *But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills, and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.*

Zephaniah is as clear as any of the rest, chap. ii. verse 11. *They shall worship him every one from his place, even all the isles of the heathen.* And chap. 3. verse 9, 10. *Then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent. From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia, my suppliants, the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering.*

Jeremiah, in the fourth chapter of his prophecies, verse 2, confirms the same truth; as likewise chap.

xvi. verse 19, and more expressly chap. xxxi. verse 34. *And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, saith the Lord.*

After the return of the captivity, we find that the Prophets still pursued the same ideas. Haggai ii. verse 7, 8. *And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of Hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of Hosts.*

Zechariah speaks in like manner, chap. ii. verse 10, 11. *Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion; for lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord. And many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people; and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the Lord of Hosts hath sent me unto thee.* And chap. viii. verse 20—22. *Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: and the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of Hosts: I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of Hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord.* And chap. ix. verse 10. he expresses the same thing more distinctly. *And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle-bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen; and his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.*

Malachi speaks to the same purpose with the greatest clearness imaginable, chap. i. verse 10, 11. *Who is there among you that shuts the doors, or kindles fire on mine altar for nought? I have no*

pleasure in you, saith the Lord of Hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand; for from the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of Hosts.

On all which passages one may make these observations:

1. That all this whole series of ideas hath as much connection to one another, as the words of those oracles have which we have now alleged.

2. That these Prophets have set it forth with all its possible characters, by the original of these people, calling them the children of Seth, by their countries, *Egypt*, *Assyria*, the *East*, and *West;* by their idolatry, by their aversion to the Jews, their ignorance, &c.

3. That these prophecies were generally understood by the Jews of old, of the calling of the Gentiles, as appears from the use the Apostles made of them when they preached to the Gentiles.

4. That forasmuch as God had ordered proselytes to be received into the Jewish communion, he seemed thereby to have hinted to them, that what he enjoined them as to particulars, ought with much more reason to be practised in general to all the nations of the world, and ought also to be universally desired.

5. That the modern Jews themselves constantly believed, that the Messiah should lead the Gentiles to repentance. So Kimtchi, Moses, Maimonides, and many other authors, since the Talmudists.

6. That the opinion which the Jews have entertained, that the Messiah, as a great conqueror, was to subdue the nations, proceeds only from the sense of the oppression they have been, and still are, under, which makes them so earnestly desire a temporal deliverance from the power of the Gentiles, by means

of the Messiah: and the pompous expression of some of the Prophets have strengthened this belief in them; though they cannot deny but that the same prophetical passages do imply that the Messiah was to subject the Gentiles by the way of instruction.

CHAP. XXIV.

That the Jews were to be rejected in the Time of the Messiah.

THERE are three things which make this particular very considerable.

The first is, That it seems altogether opposite to the design of God, who was entered into covenant with the Jews, excluding all other nations of the earth.

The second is, That nothing was a greater scandal to the Jews than the thoughts of a possibility that God should ever cast off their nation.

The third is, That the rejection of the Jews seemed less possible in the time of the Messiah, than at any other time; the Messiah being, according to their persuasion, to procure the salvation of the Jews in the first place, and before other nations were made partakers of those blessings which he brought along with him.

And it was upon this account that God hath forgot nothing which might make those oracles that relate to the rejection of the Jews, in the time of the Messiah, very sensible.

The chief privileges which made the Jews consider themselves as God's peculiar people, were these.

1. God himself was in a peculiar manner their King and Sovereign; which gave Josephus occasion to call their state a theocracy.

2. Their religious service did wholly depend upon God, who had instituted their order of priesthood.

3. God had placed them in a country by themselves, and separated them from all other nations.

4. God had given them the Urim and Thummim, which gave them an infallible resolution in all important cases happening to their state; which was an evident mark of the Divine presence and direction.

5. God gave them particular marks of his blessing, the extraordinary fruitfulness which continually ushered in their sabbatical year; the security which they enjoyed during their three solemn feasts; and above all, the deliverers which he from time to time raised up for them, their fourteen judges and kings.

And God also threatened them with evils opposite to these blessings; and all this is denounced against them step by step.

1. He declares that he would no longer be their God.

2. That he would abolish and reject their order of priesthood, which was accordingly executed by degrees.

3. That he would turn them out of their own country, without recovery.

4. That they should have no more Prophets or revelations.

5. That he would take away from them all the marks of his protection. The passages expressing these several particulars are here subjoined, which may be easily ranged under the foregoing heads, that we may understand the better that God hath plainly foretold the rejection of the Jews at the time of the Messiah.

1. Moses then threatens them with a terrible desolation. Deut. xxviii. verse 28, 29. *The Lord shall smite thee with madness and blindness, and astonishment of heart: and thou shalt grope at noon day, as the blind gropeth in darkness, and thou shalt not prosper in thy ways, and thou shalt be only op-*

pressed and spoiled evermore, and no man shall save thee.

Manasseh acknowledges that God in this passage foretels, not only their first desolation under Nebuchadnezzar, but also that which happened under Titus Vespasian; the eagle mentioned at the 49th verse of that chapter, being not only applicable to Nebuchadnezzar, whom Ezekiel, chap. xvii. represents under that notion; but more particularly to the Roman emperor Titus, whose eagles gave a literal accomplishment to that prophecy.

This makes it evident, that at the same time when God threatens them with their first desolation, he also denounces to them the last; and that consequently we may apply those passages to the second rejection of the Jews, which were spoken of the first.

2. Hosea expresseth the same in his first, second, and third chapters, where he particularly fortels their being deprived of the royal dignity, priesthood, and prophecy.

3. Isaiah speaks to the same purpose in the first, second, and fifth chapters; as also chap. xxviii, lxii, l, and lxvi. and in his xxvth chapter he speaks as if no restoration was to be expected.

4. Amos represents the same thing, chap. v. verse 16, 17, and 21, 22. *Therefore the Lord, the God of Hosts, the Lord saith thus: Wailing shall be in all streets; and they shall say in all the high-ways, Alas! alas! and they shall call the husbandmen to mourning, and such as are skilful of lamentation to wailing. And in all vineyards shall be wailing; for I will pass through thee, saith the Lord. I hate, I despise your feast-days; and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies: though ye offer me burnt-offerings and your meat-offerings, I will not accept them, neither will I regard the peace-offerings of your fat beasts.* Where he hints that their desolation shall be without recovery.

5. Jeremiah is very express in chap. v, vi, and x. verse 11. where he declares that their destruction should be without remedy; as alsoc hap. xii. and xxxi.

6. Daniel follows their steps, chap. ix. verse 25, 26, 27. where he directly points at the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. The words are these: *Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment, to restore and build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks; and threescore and two weeks the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after the threescore and two weeks shall* MESSIAH *be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the Prince that shall come, shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood; and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.* It is worth our observing, that Josephus* the historian, a little after the destruction of Jerusalem, acknowledges that this prophecy of Daniel did expressly foretel the ruin of the temple of Jerusalem, and of the Jewish government, by the arms of the Roman empire, which himself was an eye-witness of.

7. Zechariah speaks after the same manner, chap. xi. verse 9. *Then said I, I will not feed you: that that dieth, let it die; and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off: and let the rest eat, every one the flesh of another.*

8. And Malachi follows these common ideas, chap. i. verse 10 and 11. *Who is there among you that shuts the doors for nought? Neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of Hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand. For from the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my*

* Antiq. lib. x.

name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of Hosts.

I cannot conceive how any that consider the succession of these ideas, so interwoven one with another, can have the least doubt whether the Jews were to be rejected at the coming of the Messiah, or no; especially since the Apostles, and St. Paul in particular, have made it appear, that the Prophets so plainly did fortel this truth.

CHAP. XXV.

Of the Time which succeeded the publishing of these Prophecies, till the coming of the Messiah.

THUS we have seen an abridgment of the most remarkable oracles uttered, either by God himself, or by Prophets, whom he made use of to declare his designs. I might easily have alleged a far greater number; but I chose rather to content myself with these, to avoid the confusion which the multiplicity of citations is apt to occasion. And I question not but these I have mentioned, will suffice to give us an idea of God's promise concerning the Messiah sufficiently great, and enable us to make a judgment, whether that which the Christians declare to have been the accomplishment of it, be so indeed.

In the mean time, for the further clearing of this matter, I desire the reader to make some reflections on the whole matter, which seem to me to deserve a serious attention.

The first is, That God hath by degrees put an end to those divisions that were between some other nations and the Jews, founded on their hopes of the promise of the Messiah, as the time of its accomplishment drew near.

We hear little now of the enmity of the Ishmaelites against the Jews: God having placed them in the desert of Paran, they have indeed continued there in a manner invincible, but also without any great communication with their neighbour nations.

As for the Moabites and Ammonites, they had their kingdoms on the borders of the Holy Land, and continued there till the time of Nebuchadnezzar, since which we find little mention made of them, as being in a manner wholly confounded with other nations; only we meet with some few memorials of the Ammonites, whose pretensions to that promise were the weaker of the two, as being the posterity of Lot's younger daughter.

It is worth our observing, That most of the prophecies of David, as well as of the following Prophets, which thunder forth such terrible denunciations against the pride of those people, threatening them with the curse of God and final destruction, seem to have an eye to the old quarrel and jealousy; their state quarrel which happened afterwards, succeeding to this their first aversion, and hatred of the Jews.

The state and government of the Edomites, as well as their jealousy against Israel, continued till after Cyrus, who granted them the liberty of returning to their own country, as well as to the Jews who had been carried away captives with them by Nebuchadnezzar; but contrary to the hope they had of being re-established to their former estate, we find, that according to the prophecy of Malachi, they continued in bondage to their neighbours, yea to the Jews themselves, until Herod the Edomite, possessing himself of the throne of *Judea*, was probably flattered by those of his own nation, and by some Jews also, into a belief of his being the promised Messiah.

We must also take notice, That the Divine Providence seems to have continued this people so long,

on purpose that the spirit of jealousy which was between them and the Jews, might preserve the notion of the promised Messiah more fresh and lively, and to engage men to a more attentive consideration of the prophecies concerning the same; and that God, by confounding them afterwards with other nations, intended wholly to take away their pretensions; the service which before they rendered to the Jewish church, being no longer needful, after so clear and distinct a revelation.

This reflection will be owned to be more than a conjecture, if we consider God's dealing with the ten tribes: God suffers them to be carried away captives by Salmanassar, leaving only the tribes of Judah, Levi, and Benjamin, to be afterwards the depositaries of the Divine oracles.

The second is, That as it appears that God hath kept some distance of time in his revelation, that the authority of the Prophets might be fully and firmly established, which, as I have observed, was done by the accomplishment of some prophecies, respecting some particular matters of fact near at hand; so it pleased God, for above four hundred years, to leave the Jews without the light of prophecy; because that which he had given them till Malachi's time, was sufficient to make them know the Messiah, when he should appear in the world.

The third is, That this cessation of the gifts of prophecy among the Jews did serve to increase their desires for the coming of the Messiah, in whose days those gifts (which were the peculiar glory of their nation) were to be restored in far greater abundance than had ever been granted to them before.

A fourth reflection, which is well worth our attentive consideration, is, That God so ordered it in his providence, that all the books of the Old Testament were translated into the Greek about one hundred years after Malachi, that they might be communicated to all nations; the Greek tongue being at that time,

and indeed ever since the reign of Alexander the Great, a language the most known and generally spoken in the world, he having with his power carried it into the *South* and *East*.

It is natural to conceive, that the Divine Providence hereby designed these three things:

First, To establish and confirm the authority of those Divine oracles, by delivering them into the hands of the heathen, by the public authority of the Jewish nation, at the desire of a king of *Egypt*.

Secondly, To prevent caviling about the explication of those oracles. Thus, for instance, we see there is no place left to dispute the translation of that prophecy, *Behold, a virgin shall conceive*, seeing the LXX interpreters, who were Jews, have rendered it so themselves, some ages before any contests were started about it between the Jews and Christians.

The third was, To prepare and dispose the heathen for receiving the religion of the Messiah.

And indeed we may easily comprehend, 1. That it was necessary that the prophetical writings should be communicated to the heathen, in order to their ready submitting themselves to the authority of the Messiah, whom they knew by those characters which had been given of him. 2. That it was not fitting that the heathen should wholly depend on the authority of the Jews, forasmuch as the same Divine oracles do expressly affirm, that the Messiah was to be rejected by the greatest part of them.

I shall conclude these reflections with a short view of the state of the commonwealth and religion of the Jews, since the last of the Prophets.

First, One finds that this government subsisted as distinct from all other nations of the earth, as ever it did before; we see the honour wherewith Alexander the Great treated their high-priest; and that, when he was appointed arbitrator of the difference between them and the Samaritans, he determined the matter in favour of the Jews.

One sees that Alexander preserved them in the enjoyment of their rights and liberties, as they enjoyed them under the kings of *Persia;* and in particular exempted them from paying any tribute every seventh year, because then they did not sow their ground, and consequently could not reap.

And if we find that Ptolemy took *Jerusalem* on a sabbath-day, the Jews making conscience of defending themselves, because the law required their ceasing from all work; from whence Agatharcides, an heathen author, takes occasion to blame their law; if we find him carrying a great number of Jews with him into *Egypt*, yet withal we find him treating them with as much kindness as the Macedonians themselves, appointing distinct places in *Egypt* and *Lybia* for their habitation.

If we find that powerful princes, such as Antiochus, Epiphanes, and some others of his successors, broke the power of the Jews, profaned their temple, and forced great numbers of them to abjure their religion; yet we see them also at the same time giving the highest instances of an immovable constancy and courage in defence of their law, and in enduring the most exquisite tortures; we see others of them encouraged with the love of their country, as well as religion, putting themselves into a posture of defence, purifying the temple, and celebrating a festival which is observed even at this day; and lastly obtaining favourable treaties at the hands of their enemies; as may be seen in the books of the Maccabees, and in the twelfth book of Josephus's Antiquities: yea, we find their name and glory at that time spread as far as *Lacedæmon*, with which commonwealth they made an alliance during the high-priesthood of Onias.

One sees them after this so considerable, under the successor of Antiochus their persecutor, that even those kings sue for their alliance with great presents.

One sees that Ptolemy Philometer granted to Onias the son, leave to build a temple in *Egypt*, for the

convenience of those Jews whom Ptolemy the son of Lagus had carried thither, as well as for those who left their country for the oppression of the Seleucidæ; for *Judea*, being situate between *Syria* and *Egypt*, was ordinarily the theatre of war between those two states. It is here worth our noting, that the Jews undertook the building of the temple in *Egypt*, as thinking themselves authorized by that prophecy, Isa. xix. 24. it being a thing otherwise forbid by the law.

One sees, in the same prince's reign, a great contest between the Samaritans and the Jews, about the pre-eminence of their temples, at *Jerusalem* and mount *Gerizim*, decided by him in favour of the Jews: on which occasion the Jews shewed that prince their law, and acquainted him with the series of their history, to confute the Samaritan's pretensions.

One sees after this, when the Jews had conferred the sovereignty and high-priesthood on Simon, that their state became so powerful, that under Hyrcanus his successor, they were in a condition to attack their enemies in *Syria*, and compel the Edomites to admit circumcision. Aristobulus his son was crowned; his brother succeeded him in the royal dignity, and left the state in a flourishing condition, notwithstanding the civil and foreign wars he was engaged in.

We find afterwards, that the intestine divisions among the successors of those Jewish princes did by degrees open a gap for foreign power to enter, and prevail over them: Pompey, siding with Hyrcanus, took *Jerusalem*, and made the Jews tributary to the Romans, but without changing any thing in their religion.

Julius Cæsar a while after bestowed the kingdom of *Judea* upon Herod the Edomite. Augustus after him used the Jews with the same equity as Pompey before him had done, as appears from one of his declarations published in favour of the Jews of *Egypt*

and *Asia*, recorded by Josephus. This Herod and Augustus are the same under whom our Saviour Jesus Christ was born.

It is evident, therefore, That the state of the Jews has continued distinct from other nations, and sufficiently known, from the time of the Prophet Malachi until Herod.

We may also truly assert, That whatever inclination the Jews of old had for the idolatries of their neighbours, yet we do not find them given that way during this interval, between the last of their Prophets and Herod; as if the charge and command of that Prophet Malachi had always sounded in their ears, Mal. iv. verse 4. *Remember the law of Moses my servant*, &c.

One sees that the Jews under the Maccabees, in great numbers, suffered martyrdom, rather than abjure their religion; and that they observed the ceremonial law with all carefulness, of which Augustus himself was witness.

One sees that, under strangers and heathen kings, they exempted themselves from answering any suit at law on the sabbath-day, from paying tribute the seventh year, and preserving the rights and privileges of their temple in spite of all opposition. Lastly, one finds them, during Herod's government, supported by the favour of the Roman empire, in refusing to set up the emperor's trophies, for fear lest some images might be hid under them, which they looked upon as a crime against their law.

I am not ignorant, that since Malachi some heresies sprung up among the Jews, their commerce with the Greeks (who applied themselves to philosophical speculations) having contributed to make them much more disputatious than they were before. The authority likewise of their kings, who were high-priests also, may have had a great stroke in blemishing the purity of their religion.

But yet the disputes we find amongst them, as that of the fatality of events, did not at all touch the substance of their religion.

They no sooner found the spirit of epicurism to creep in amongst them, but they framed such additions to their public liturgy, as they thought most proper to eradicate, or at least condemn, that corruption.

I confess also, that the Pharisees and Doctors of their law had greatly altered their morality, in making their own explications (by the great authority which they had amongst the people) to pass for authentic: but yet this change and corruption in their morals as to practice, did not go so far as to abolish the laws themselves, which were only wrested from their true meaning. This was indeed a great corruption, but not such a one as could make it to be no more the same religion.

So that we may boldly assert (which is a thing very important to our present purpose), That the state and religion of the Jews have continued sufficiently entire till the time of the appearing of the Messiah in the world, for their preserving of whatsoever was necessary, viz. as well the books of the Old Testament as the knowledge of those oracles which foretold the coming of the Messiah, together with the knowledge of these principles, according to which the Prophets have spoken in their predictions concerning him.

REFLECTIONS

UPON THE

Books of the Holy Scripture,

TO ESTABLISH THE TRUTH

OF THE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

PART FOURTH.

ON THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

PREFACE.

I HAVE shewn in my Reflections upon the Book of Genesis, that the facts of the Creation, and the promises of the Messiah, are truths not to be questioned, and that the ideas of this Messiah continued vigorously all the time that preceded the children of Israel's going out of *Egypt*.

We have seen afterwards, in the Remarks which I have made upon the Laws which God gave to Moses, that it was the great design of God to keep men in the expectation of this Messiah, and to take care that they might certainly know him whenever he should appear in the world.

I have taken notice, in the third part of these Reflections, of the care which God took to give a great number of Oracles to explain particularly all the characters of this Messiah, the place and manner of his Birth, the principal circumstances of his Life, Death, and Resurrection, and to foretel the effusion of the gifts of the Holy Ghost upon the Gentiles, their call to the Religion of the Messiah, and lastly, the overthrow of the whole model of the Jewish religion and commonwealth, which was no longer of any use after the coming of the Messiah, and the calling of the Gentiles.

My present business is now to shew, That in the books of the New Testament we may find an exact accomplishment of this whole design, wherein God had with so much care instructed the world so long before; and there is nothing more easy, if we will but take a little pains to read these books attentively, and to compare them with the model which God himself made, as we have hitherto described it.

To make this truth yet more evident, I think it will be necessary to do two or three things, which seem to be very important for my present design.

And first, I am to observe, that there appears a most perfect coherence between the ideas of the Old Testament and those of the New; which is absolutely necessary, to shew that there is in these books a perfect unity of design, notwithstanding the vast difference there is between the Jews who preserve the Old Testament, and the Christians who preserve the New.

Secondly, I am to demonstrate that the ideas of the Messiah were very strong in the minds of the Jews at the very time that Jesus Christ appeared in the world.

This was absolutely necessary, that they might not have wherewith to accuse those who received Christ for the Messiah, of being deceived in their choice, for not having had the exact ideas of the Messiah which God had promised.

I shall upon this account shew in the third place, That when Jesus Christ did appear in the world, the model which God had framed in the law of Moses, whereby the Messiah might be plainly known, did then subsist in the manner wherein God had framed it.

After this, I shall endeavour to shew by proofs, which are indeed unquestionable, That in examining all the characters which the Prophets gave, by which the Messiah might be known, we cannot conceive a more exact execution of God's design, as to the

Messiah, than that which we find in the person of Jesus Christ, whereof the books of the New Testament have given us the history.

Lastly, I shall shew clearly that this model which God had framed in giving the law, and in forming the commonwealth and religion of the Jews in so proper a manner, to make the Messiah certainly known, is not in being at this day; but that it was so destroyed by the total dispersion of that people, that we should not be able to know the Messiah if he should now appear again in the world: and that indeed the principal events, which according to the oracles were to follow the coming of the Messiah, are already come to pass in part, and do still come to pass every day.

I hope to evince these truths beyond all contest: indeed the bare reading of the books of the New Testament plainly discovers the coherence which they have with the books of the Old; it shews clearly that the ideas of the Messiah were at that time very strong in the minds of the Jews; and it supposeth, without any affectation, that that model which God had made so necessary to distinguish the Messiah, stood at that time entire.

In particular, it is certain, that the four Evangelists, by the relation of unquestionable matters of fact, have proved that Jesus, the son of Mary, is the Messiah which God had promised.

St. Luke shews, in the Acts of the Apostles, that after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the effusion of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, the Gospel was preached to the heathens.

The Epistles are a natural consequence of this vocation of the heathens, and of the abolishing of the law of Moses, which the Apostles had undertaken. They unanimously conspire to shew that God had resolved to call the heathens to partake of salvation, that the Jews for the greatest part should be justly deprived thereof, because they obstinately rejected

the Messiah. Several questions are examined, which arose either from the calling of the Gentiles, or from the abolishing of the ceremonial worship.

The succession of the history of the Christian church justifies, That after the destruction of *Jerusalem* all people embraced the religion of Jesus Christ, in receiving him for the Messiah whom God had promised to the Patriarchs and to the Jews.

I shall resume all these articles one by one, in that natural order in which I have proposed them.

REFLECTIONS,

&c. &c.

PART FOURTH.

ON THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

CHAP. I.

That there appears a very just Connection between the Ideas of the Old Testament, and those of the New, the latter borrowing Light from the former.

AS it is not much the character of romances, even then when they are most tied up to the rules of probability, to borrow either the style or ideas of those authors from whom they take their subject, so I suppose that, in this my undertaking to shew that the New Testament is an exact accomplishment of the Old, it is very important to make out, that at the first reading of the Gospels and Apostolical writings, one finds in them a perfect conformity of ideas with the writings of the Old Testament.

One may to this purpose observe in general, that the Gospel supposeth the Divine authority of the books of the Old Testament, as an unquestionable truth. The gospels and epistles have the same co-

herence with the books of the law and the Prophets which the writings of the latter Prophets have with those of the former, and which the books of all the Prophets together have with the books of Moses, and with the prophecies, laws, and histories, which are contained therein.

One may take notice afterwards, that all the books of the New Testament have an essential relation to those of the Old, in their most principal designs. I have shewed that their design was no other, than to raise men to expectations of the Messiah, and to paint him to the life whom God had promised from the beginning of the world; and the only design of the New Testament is, to prove that the Messiah is come according to the Prophets. The first speaks concerning the Messiah as expected; the latter, as already come.

But we must proceed to a more particular view of this matter. I say then, first of all, that the Christians have the same object of their faith which the Jews had; this Jesus Christ himself declares, where he saith, *This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* Behold here the true character of the Christian religion, as well as of the Jewish, to believe one only God, to own a Messiah, and to acknowledge that Jesus Christ is he. The Jews agree with us in the two former articles, though they dispute the last.

I say, in the second place, that the laws of the gospel, which regulate religion and the conduct of particular persons in that society, are exactly the same with those of the Old Testament. Jesus Christ in his sermon upon the mount, which contains an abridgment of his ethics, had no other end but to restore the true sense and meaning of those laws God had given upon mount *Sinai;* and though, in the matter of divorces, it seems opposite to that law wherein God had before permitted them, yet we may

easily conceive that he began to abrogate those orders and dispensations which were only given to make the Messiah known whenever he should appear.

The prayer which Jesus Christ taught his Apostles is full of notions which reigned among the Jews, as several expositors have manifested. I shall content myself with alleging the instance of the petition for our daily bread, which has an evident regard to the manna which God gave the children of Israel in the wilderness for forty years.

We know also that the sacraments of the baptism and the eucharist are originally Jewish ceremonies, which Jesus Christ hath applied, with a very little variation, to much more important subjects. Baptism was a washing which accompanied the sacrifices and circumcision of proselytes; and the washing practised under the law of Moses, signified that the proselyte who was admitted to the same, was resolved to renounce his former courses, and for the time to come to follow an opposite way of living, according to the rules prescribed him by the Ministers of Heaven, after that they, in the name of God, had assured him of the remission of his sins.

The eucharist was an appendix of the feast of the passover, which preserved the memory of the sufferings of the Israelites in *Egypt*, and the deliverance he afforded them, in punishing of the Egyptians. This ceremony did perpetuate the memory of the deliverance till the coming of the Messiah. Jesus Christ hath substituted to this figure an instance of the curse of God against the posterity of Cham, the idea of his death, by which he had communicated his blessing to all nations of the earth according to his promise; and he hath made it a more full and exact memorial of his death, which he would have us to consider as the death of the true *Lamb, which takes away the sins of the world.* As the old covenant was made in the blood of a lamb, so Jesus

Christ, with regard to the New Testament or covenant promised by Jeremiah, chap. xxxi. ordains the celebrating the memorial of the blood he had spilt, *This is the New Testament in my blood*, &c. And lastly, whereas the law ordained the commemoration of the paschal lamb but once a year, Jesus Christ seems to appoint a much more frequent celebration of the eucharist, when he saith, *As oft as ye shall eat this bread*, &c. the reason of which, without doubt, is taken from the greatness of the benefit which his death confers upon us.

It is well worth our observation, that ordinarily the same prophetical ideas that are found in the Old Testament may be met with in the New. The book of the Revelations contains abundance of particulars set down in the prophecies of Zechariah and Ezekiel. Jesus Christ himself pursues the ideas of the Prophet Joel in the xxivth of Matthew, when he sets forth the destruction of *Jerusalem;* and afterwards he describes the same, according to the notions which Daniel gives us thereof.

Daniel foretels, in the viith chapter of this book, the destruction of the Roman monarchy by the Christians, whom he styles *The People of the Most High.* St. Paul follows the same notion, 1 Cor. vi. 2. where he supposeth it as a known thing; *The Saints* (saith he) *shall judge the world.* And St. John, in the xxth of the Revelations, verse 4, represents Satan bound, and the government put into the hands of believers.

It is also very remarkable, that the promises and threats of Jesus Christ are expressed in terms borrowed from the Old Testament. These words of Jesus Christ, *He that hears my words, and believes in him that sent me, hath eternal life, and shall not come into judgment*, &c. have not they a plain relation to Adam's unbelief and disobedience, to the judgment he underwent, and the punishment imposed on him? Is it not from this spirit, which penetrates

both, that the New Testament so oft makes mention of a *new Canaan*, a *new Jerusalem*, a *new name*, &c. and that glory is represented to us sometimes under the notion of Paradise, sometimes of a feast, where Abraham (who is called *The Father of the Faithful)* sits at the upper end?

Eternal damnation is represented to us under the notion of the valley of *Hinnom*, of a lake burning with fire and brimstone, with regard to the lake of *Sodom*, and to the place where the filth of *Jerusalem* was wont to be burnt up and consumed. It is upon this account that believers are exhorted to *remember Lot's wife*, Luke ix. 62. and xvii. 32. and to depart from the midst of the wicked, Heb. xiii.

If we consider the election of the Apostles, and of the seventy Disciples, we shall find the reference they have to the heads of the twelve tribes, and to the seventy elders whom Moses chose, to preserve the memory of the seventy souls Jacob brought with him into *Egypt*. Those passages, *Ye shall sit on twelve thrones, and your names are written in the book of life*, and the number of 144,000, being the product of 12 times 12, by allusion to the twelve tribes, do all borrow their light from those ancient histories.

Throughout the New Testament we find nothing but a continual allusion to the state of the Jews: all those ideas of the *liberty of the sons of God* do allude to the ceremony of their jubilee. The *first born* mentioned there, and the *kingdom of Priests*, are not to be understood but by casting our eye on the Old Testament. If Jesus Christ be called the *chief Corner Stone*, if Peter be called a *Stone or Rock*, Believers *living Stones*, and the Apostles *Foundations*, it is by way of allusion to the manner in which the twelve princes or heads of the tribes did contribute towards the building of the temple, and to the manner of the building of it. If the children of Zebedee are called Boanerges, it is with

reference to the second of Haggai, *Yet once, and I will shake the heavens and the earth.* That the Heathens are described as a people *afar off*, and what is spoken concerning the wall of partition, hath a visible respect to the Gentiles being prohibited to enter into the holy place of the temple.

If I would instance in all the mystical relations of the one volume to the other, I might say that there appears a singular conformity between them, even in those things which seem most opposite. Moses, the first and great minister of the law, had a stammering speech; Zachary, the father of St. John the Baptist, was struck dumb, when he was to pronounce the solemn blessing to the people; whereas Jesus Christ, on the contrary, hath this character given of him, that *never man spake like him.* God said at the beginning, *Increase and multiply;* he repeats the same to Noah, in order to the propagation of mankind, and replenishing the earth. Jesus Christ saith, *Go and teach all nations;* and the word is constantly represented to us as the seed of the regeneration and baptism, as the laver or washing whereby we acquire a new birth. We see Noah receiving the dove into the ark with an olive branch, as a sign of the peace of Heaven; and Jesus Christ receives a like token.

Fire falls down from heaven on the sacrifice of Abel, Noah, Moses, David, Solomon, and Elijah, as a token that God accepted their offerings; and God sends the same mark of his favour on the day of Pentecost, to declare that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ was most acceptable to him.

God had forbid the high priest to rend his clothes on any occasion whatsoever, that rending of garments involving a mystery, as appears from the history of Jeroboam; and yet we see, that the high-priest rent his clothes at the condemnation of our Saviour, and thereby violated for ever the authority of his priesthood: whereas, on the contrary, we find the gar-

ments of our Lord and Saviour were left whole and entire, to signify to us the eternity of his priesthood: We see that the ear of Malchus, the high priest's servant, was cut off by St. Peter, and that Jesus Christ restored it again, to shew that the synagogue had lost the true faith, and Jesus Christ alone was able to restore it. We see the holy place in the temple opened at the death of Christ, by the rending of the vail; which signified that the ceremonial law was then to lose its force and authority.

But the observations already made are sufficient to make out what I intend, without having recourse to these mysteries; and I belive no man can make such reflections, without being persuaded that so great a conformity of ideas must necessarily imply a perfect unity of design: now it is impossible to suppose that this unity of design should be so constantly observed by different authors, who lived at such a distance of times, places, and interests, without being convinced of a perpetual Divine guidance.

I acknowledge that in the New Testament there may be found some decisions which seem wholly opposite to those of the Old: for instance, we find there a total abrogation of the ceremonial law; but, forasmuch as all those observations had no other use but to distinguish the Jews from all other nations of the earth, and by this means to make the Messiah known to the Jews, amongst whom he was to be born, so it is obvious to conceive that all those ceremonies were of course to be abolished after that the Messiah was come into the world, and that, if we consider things in this view, we shall find no contradiction at all between Moses, who established these ceremonies, and the Apostles, who abolished them.

But, before we come to confirm these grounds, we must make it appear, that the ideas of the Messiah continued very fresh in the minds of the Jews; and this shall be the subject of the following chapter.

CHAP. II.

That the Ideas of the Messiah continued very fresh in the Minds of the Jews at the Time of the Coming of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

IT would be an easy matter for me here to shew that the ideas of the Messiah were lively in the minds of the Jews before the coming of Jesus Christ. This appears from the fable which the Rabbies told Origen, concerning Zedechiah, and Ahiab, whom the king of *Babylon* burnt, for persuading the Jewish women that they were the persons that were to conceive the Messiah. But I intend to make use of proofs of a different nature.

Now, to prove that the notion of the Messiah was very fresh in the minds of the Jews, we need only take notice, that the promise of God concerning him, was the first, the most important, and repeated with the greatest assiduity in the books of the Prophets; and consequently it employed them the most: God having, for this reason, obliged them to read the books of Moses every sabbath, to sing the Psalms of David, and to examine the writings of the Prophets, where the promise of the Messiah was a thousand times repeated.

We may add a great deal of light to this observation, if we consider that the circumstances of the Jews at that time engaged them to give more diligent heed to what the Prophets had declared; and by weighing several matters of fact set down in the Gospel, to shew the universal effect of the lively impression of this notion of the Messiah on the minds of the Jews.

Without doubt the estate of the Jews at that time, being equally oppressed by the power of the Romans, and that of Herod, could not but put them upon a

careful examining of the promises which God had so often vouchsafed them concerning the Messiah; and the rather, because God had often represented to them the kingdom of the Messiah as a temporal kingdom, which was to deliver them from the power of their enemies.

This appears very evident in the gospel on several occasions. We find that the people of *Jerusalem* and Herod were troubled at the news of the birth of Jesus, as that which would probably cause great troubles and desolations, before the kingdom of the Messiah could subdue the Romans as well as Herod: one sees that the multitudes would have taken Christ and proclaimed him their king, and submitted themselves to him as the true Messiah; one sees that Christ's own disciples, both before and after his death, talked agreeably to these popular ideas. What else can we make of that passage of the mother of James and John, when she begs for them the chief places in his kingdom? When the Apostles dispute which of them should be the greatest, was it not an effect of the same cause? Did not the Apostles, when they went to Emaus, discourse at the same rate? Did not they express themselves with much grief and trouble, before they were instructed in the most sublime truths of the gospel? *But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel.*

It is also very observable, that John the Baptist appears and administers the sacrament of baptism at this time: this his practice gave the Jews occasion to take him for the Messiah; but what ground had they to think so? surely from what they had read in Ezekiel, chap. xxxvi. verse 25. And indeed, when the great council of the Jews deputed some persons to him, they charged them to know of him whether he were the Messiah or not; and if not, why he exercised a function which that prophecy seemed to

appropriate to the Messiah himself, in calling him the Angel of the Covenant?

The same truth may also be collected from what is related to us concerning the opinions of the Jews about the person of Christ: *Whom*, saith our Saviour, *do people say I am?* And the Apostles answer, that some said he was John the Baptist, others Jeremiah, others Elias, and others again *that Prophet*, that is to say the Messiah, who is so called by way of excellence in the xviiith of Deuteronomy. And we find that when Jesus Christ styled himself *the Son of Man*, the multitudes easily conceived that he alluded to the seventh of Daniel, where the Messiah is so called.

We perceive also, from many other places in the Gospel, that the multitudes were very well acquainted with those passages in the Old Testament which were commonly applied to the Messiah: *The Messiah, when he appears*, say they, *will he do greater signs than this man doth?* Others are offended because Jesus Christ was of Nazareth, arguing from thence that he could not be the Messiah; others maintain that, when the Messiah should come, it would not be known whence he was; and others again asserted, that the Messiah was to continue for ever: all which is an evident sign that the ideas of the Messiah were very familiar among the Jews.

This must have been so of necessity, because the Samaritans themselves were possessed with the same ideas, though they had not so great an extent of light as the Jews had. They did not indeed altogether reject the writings of the Prophets, but rather studied them with care: their animosity against the Jews, and their jealousy upon account of the promise, of the place of the temple, and other things in question, do manifestly shew that the characters of the Messiah were known to them, and that they were exactly informed in that whole matter.

One ought also to take notice, that as the Apostles call that *the fulness of time*, because the times set down by the Prophets were almost expired, and the sceptre was already departed from *Judah*, the weeks of Daniel were ended, and the kingdoms of *Syria* and *Egypt* were overturned, so there were several good men who were filled with an expectation of the Messiah. Anna and Simeon are represented to us as those who, by their study of the Holy Scriptures, had discovered that the time of the coming of the Messiah was near at hand; much in the same manner as Daniel is represented to us to have learnt from the prophecy of Jeremiah, that the captivity was almost expired.

I shall add one argument more, which seems beyond exception; that many persons were found, about the time of Jesus Christ, who were either drawn by others into an opinion of their being the Messiah, or who of themselves desired to be accounted so. Thus we are told that the flatterers of Herod the Great gave him the title of Messiah: of this number were Theudas and Judas Gaulonites, with some others. Thus also, soon after, some applied the prophecies concerning the Messiah to Vespasian the emperor, because he had been chosen in the east. This is attested by Josephus, Tacitus, and Suetonius, who assure us that the notion of the promised Messiah, as of a great king, was very common in the east, and not unknown in the west.

We know that, under the emperor Adrian, Barchochab was the cause of a terrible sedition, by making the Jews believe that he was the Messiah; and we cannot be ignorant how many such like impostors have been since, who have abused the credulity of the Jews, even until Sabatai Sevi,* who deluded them about one and twenty years since.

* Rycaut. Turk. Hist. vol. 2. p. 174. &c.

Lastly, we cannot but think that this idea of the Messiah was always fresh among the Jews, because we find that from that time they have continually disputed with the Christians about this matter; because they tell us of two Messiahs, one the son of Judah, and the other the son of Joseph; and because, in all places of the world whither they are scattered, they speak of the Messiah in their Commentaries on the Scriptures, in their sermons, in their public prayers, and their common conversation.

Surely if any time can be supposed wherein they might have lost their knowledge and distinct hope of the Messiah, it must be since the time appointed for his coming is expired, when, by the Christians insulting over their vain expectations, they have been obliged (finding themselves disappointed by prophetical calculations) to set up that rash maxim, *Cursed is he that computes the times;* and therefore it is evident, that these notions were much more lively in them when their hopes were well grounded, and when they might pretend to see them accomplished.

It is no less certain, that the model appointed by God, by means of which the Messiah might be certainly known, did still subsist in the same manner as God at first had formed it: but that I may give a full light to this capital truth, I shall bind myself to consider the several arguments for it distinctly; and shall begin with those which shew that the commonwealth of the Jews did subsist according to the Divine model; and then proceed to others, which demonstrate that God had therein preserved all the distinctions necessary to his design.

CHAP. III.

That the Commonwealth of the Jews did still subsist, and follow the Model which God had formed, in order to the certain Knowing of the Messiah.

THERE are two things which seem to contradict this proposition: the one is, the overturning of the Jewish State; the other is, the corruption of their religion: but it is easy to remove both these difficulties.

For the overturning of the state of the Jews did not draw along with it that of the Scripture, and the laws on which it was founded, and afterwards governed; wherefore the case of this republic is not the same with that of *Athens* or *Lacedæmon*, which at present subsist no where but in books, because there are no people now that follow the laws of the ancient legislators of *Sparta* or *Athens*.

But, on the contrary, we find the Jews, in all parts of the world, keeping these laws with great carefulness, studying them with the greatest application, and flattering themselves that God will one day, re-establish them in *Judea*, which they expect by means of the Messiah, whom God at first promised to them.

It is now above 1600 years that they have been scattered throughout the world, and yet we find not that their condition has made them change their measures or hopes; and though they have already been deceived by a great number of false Messiahs, yet do not they for all that look upon the condition of their commonwealth as irrecoverable.

Now, if during so long a series of ages they have kept their laws with so much carefulness, if they still religiously observe all those laws which could be kept

without the bounds of the Holy Land; one sees not but that in all probability they must have kept them more exactly at the time of Jesus Christ, and before his coming, when they could keep them with much more ease since that time, and that for many considerable reasons?

For, first, Their dispersion then was in one only nation; whereas now they are scattered amongst Heathens, Christians, and Mahometans.

2. They had then Prophets, who exhorted them to the observance of these laws, which now they have wanted for so many ages.

3. They had often princes that were very favourable to them, such as Cyrus and Darius, who ordered that sacrifices should be offered for themselves, in the temple at *Jerusalem;* and Pompey afterwards had the same inclinations for them: whereas, since the time of their dispersion, they have scarcely met with any one prince who has been favourable to them, if we except Julian the apostate; who, from an effect of his hatred against the Christians, did vainly strive to re-establish them.

4. They had a temple, to which the whole state of their republic was fixed; Herod, about the time of our Saviour, had most magnificently repaired it: whereas now, for so many ages, they have neither temple nor altar.

5. They had high-priests among them that were entrusted with the sovereign power, and were kings of their nation; whereas now they have neither king nor prince of their faith.

6. Their laws being translated into Greek since the time of Ptolemy Philadelphus, it gave occasion to an extraordinary jealousy between the Jews of *Egypt*, who had the text of Scripture in Greek, and between those of *Jerusalem*, who had it in Hebrew; whereas now, all this is altogether ceased, all the Jews now, for many ages, making use only of the Hebrew text.

Since, therefore, we find that they, without prophets, without king, out of their own country, &c. have observed these laws for so many ages, notwithstanding their dispersion throughout all places, and amongst all sorts of people; how much rather may we conceive they did so since the time of Ezra, who placed the books of the Old Testament in the order in which we have them at this day? There are only 542 years from the time of the return of their captivity, which happened in the year 3468, to the birth of Christ; and but 259 years from their return, to the translation of the Seventy: and we know that above 1600 years are passed since their general dispersion.

Moreover, it appears that the Romans had so well preserved the form of the Jewish government from Pompey's time, as well as that of their religion, that a Roman general sent to demand a kind of permission of the Jews, to let him pass with the Roman eagles through *Syria*. We know that those eagles were never set up at *Jerusalem;* but it was at a time when a Roman commander intended to stir up the Jews to sedition, and by that means to make the emperor their enemy. Yea, we find, that though the Romans reserved to themselves the power of the sword, yet they permitted to the Jews the judgment of zeal, against those whom they called Heretics, whom they tore to pieces, to execute the rigour of the law.

If we find that a Roman proconsul would not concern himself with questions of their law, arising without the bounds of their own country, how much rather may we judge that they enjoyed an entire liberty within *Judea?* And, indeed, we find the priests sending their commissioners to *Damascus** against the Christians, without doubt with design to execute the law against impostors. St. Paul was beaten several times with forty stripes, save one, which could

* Acts ix. 4.

not be upon any other pretence but to obey the law in that matter.

These proofs are sufficient to make out that the commonwealth of the Jews subsisted still in the same manner as God instituted it.

And as for what concerns the overthrow of their religion as God had interwoven the laws that regulated it, with those of their government, so that their religion was nothing else but a religious policy; it is evident that their government continuing at the time of Jesus Christ, we cannot doubt but that their religion, notwithstanding the corruption which the Pharisees and traditionary Jews, whom Christ continually censures, had introduced, did still continue pure enough to answer the model which God had framed.

They rejected the Samaritans, as appears from the ivth of St. John, and looked upon them as Heretics, having no commerce with them.

They lived in a perfect alienation from the Heathen: it is with this St. Peter begins his discourse to the assembly at the house of Cornelius, Acts x. 28.

They lived in an exact observance of the solemn feasts which God had prescribed them, viz. the passover, pentecost, the feast of expiation, and of tabernacles.

They observed the feasts which their ancestors had joined to these upon extraordinary occasions, as that of the dedication, that of Lots; and some fasts which they kept then, as they do to this day. This appears by the history of the Gospel, and by the acts of the Apostles.

They assisted at these solemn festivals with much regularity.

They did not till their ground in the seventh year, according to God's command, which made the Heathen princes which were over them, to release them from paying any tribute that year, as may be seen in Josephus and other authors.

They taught the law in their synagogues, and that every sabbath day.

They were so scrupulous in their observation of the sabbath, that they accused our Saviour for healing the sick on that day.

It appears that lepers were sequestered, and that they observed the distinction of the several kinds of leprosy, according to the law of Moses.

We find, by the history of the Gadarenes, that swine were looked upon as unclean beasts.

It is certain that they paid the tribute which was appointed for the use of the temple, according to the law of Moses, and the re-establishment of that custom, which we find 2 Chron. xxiv. 5. Josephus* tells us that this practice was continued till the destruction of the temple. We meet with the same in Tacitus, and other Heathen authors of that time.

I acknowledge that at the same time they were extremely corrupt in their doctrines, with which Christ upbraids the Pharisees and Sadducees: but this corruption respected rather their morals, than the externals of their religion; as appears plainly from hence, that Jesus Christ upbraids the Pharisees with their tithing mint and cummin, that is, with their observance of outward niceties, whilst they neglected the very essentials of piety.

They held the Heathens could not pass for their neighbours; from whence it would follow, that God did not forbid them to bear false witness against a Heathen. Hence also they concluded that it was lawful for them to kill their enemies; and this fomented their hatred and animosity against all other nations. It was on this account that the Disciples of Jesus Christ marvelled that he talked with a Samaritan woman.

* Antiq. xviii. ch. xii.

Their decisions concerning adultery were no less corrupt, which they declared to be no sin, so long as it did not proceed to the outward act; which opinion of theirs was more gross than that of many Heathens, who had a truer idea of the purity of heart which God requires of us, as well as that of the body. But yet this did not altogether destroy their religion, though it obscured the excellency and sublimity thereof.

As for the Sadducees, besides that their errors were only speculative, amongst the greater part of them, it is certain that what the Gospel saith of their denying the existence of souls and spirits, and the doctrine of the resurrection, must be understood with some qualification, as the learned have solidly proved, and, amongst others, Dr. Lightfoot on the Gospels.

And without repeating those things which secured the preservation of their state, and which also visibly tended to the preserving of their religion, I shall only observe, that the Jews, at this day, with very little difference, are found in the same practices and opinions, as to their religion, which they had at the time of our Saviour.

Seeing, then, that after so long a time of sixteen hundred years we find no greater change in their belief (though their traditions are considerably increased, the rules whereof they have infinitely multiplied, and thereby increased this corruption), how can it be imagined that the religion of the Jews was wholly lost, or had no being at the time of our Saviour Jesus Christ?

Let this therefore be established as a certain truth, That the commonwealth of the Jews subsisting entirely, it was easy to know whether the distinctions which were necessary to discover and make known the Messiah, were still found in the state of the Jews and their religion. This is that I am now going to make out.

CHAP. IV.

That all the Distinctions necessary for discovering of the Messiah, still continued in the State of the Jews, at the Time of our Lord.

I DO not know whether any man can deny that circumcision, which is one of the principal marks of the Jews, was practised at that time; if any one should dare to dispute this truth, we need only to represent to him, that the main dispute between the first Disciples of Jesus Christ and the Jews, was about the observation of this ceremony.

Neither were the Jews only obstinate in this belief; but we find also that those who first embraced the Christian religion, maintained that the Heathens themselves ought to submit to the yoke of circumcision, before they could enter into the Divine covenant, and enjoy the privileges of God's people, whom circumcision distinguished from the rest of the world.

One sees, that though God scattered the ten tribes, yet some of them still remained in *Palestine*, and were distinctly known as such. This appears from the Acts of the Apostles, where mention is made of a widow of the tribe of Asher; and St. Paul boasts of his being a Benjamite.

They upbraided Herod, notwithstanding he was their king, with his being an Edomite, and not originally a Jew.

One sees, that about *Tyre* and *Sidon* there remained still a distinct knowledge of the Canaanites.

It is known that *Gallilee* was less esteemed than *Judea*, because many of the Gentiles were settled there, by which means the Jews of that province were obliged to some commerce with them; from which those who lived more distinct, thought that they had

a right to undervalue those that were settled in *Galilee.*

One may also boldly assert, that all places were still distinctly known to what tribe they did belong. Thus it is observed that *Capernaum* was in the borders of *Naphtali* and *Zebulun,* that *Bethlehem* was in the tribe of *Judah,* which is related as a thing publicly known.

It is known that the priests still possess the cities which Joshua had assigned to them. Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, dwelt at *Hebron,** a city belonging to the priests in the tribe of *Judah.*

One sees that even the Samaritan woman had a distinct knowledge of some famous places in the Holy Land, as Jacob's Well, and the possession which he gave to his son Joseph; and that those of her religion took a prejudice against the Jews, because Jacob had built an altar at *Sichem.*

One sees that they kept up the practice of redeeming their first-born, which at this day is still observed by the Jews.

As also the practice of polygamy, which was so common among them, that St. Paul thought himself obliged to forbid the same to the pastors of the Christian church, that he might abolish it by little and little amongst those that embraced the doctrine of Jesus Christ.

One sees, from the nineteenth of St. Matthew, that divorces were publicly practised amongst them, as they are to this day.

If one makes any reflection upon the objection the Sadducees made to our Saviour, concerning the woman than successively had seven brothers for her husbands, we shall perceive that the desire of posterity being predominant amongst them, was the cause of the continuance of this custom, which began in the time of the patriarch Judah.

* Josh. xxi. 10, 11.

We have elsewhere taken notice of the extreme carefulness of the Jews, in preserving the marks of their daughters' virginity, which has constantly continued down, since the coming of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

The Gospel, which informs us that the Jews were deprived of the power of the sword, doth notwithstanding sufficiently signify to us, not only the extreme horror which the Jews had conceived against adultery (thus we find Jesus Christ upbraiding the Pharisees, that adulterers, that is, the greatest of sinners, entered into the kingdom of heaven before them), but also that the laws against adultererers and adulteresses were severely executed.

In short, one sees, that by a judgment of zeal, as they call it, they brought a woman to our Saviour which was taken in adultery, before they went about to stone her; for one ought to know, that the law only subjected young women, who were defiled after a contract, to that sort of punishment; because, after they were once contracted, they were reputed the wives of those to whom they were betrothed; and such an one was she of whom we read in the eighth chapter of St. John, and not a person actually married, whose punishment, according to the law, was to be strangled.

One sees that St. Paul supposeth, that the law which subjected a virgin to the will of her father, and gave him power to make void her vows at pleasure, was still in force.

I will not mention here what the ancients tell us of the distinction which they say was made between virgins and married women, as well in the temple as in their synagogues; I shall only say, that this their tradition is not without ground.

It is known that the order established by David for exercising the priestly functions was exactly observed by them: Zacharias was of the course of *Abia*, which was the eighth in order, as is mentioned 1 Chron.

xxiv. 11. and he offered incense according to the law, set down Exod. xxx. verse 7, 8.

One sees that the Jews would not suffer the dead bodies to hang upon the cross after sunset, according to what we find was practised at the time of Joshua, in pursuance of that law, which we find Deut. xxi. verse 23.

I only mention these particulars now, intending hereafter, that I may avoid tedious repetitions, to enlarge more expressly, when I shall come to shew, as to every article, the exact accomplishment of the ancient oracles concerning the Messiah, in the person of our Saviour Jesus Christ; together with the use of these distinctions which bar any other, except Jesus Christ, from attributing that title to himself, and from abusing the credulity of the Jews.

It would be an easy matter for me to make a numerous list of these characters, according to all the different oracles which God gave to the Jews on this subject, and to justify the exact fulfilling of them in the person of Jesus Christ. And indeed it was not without cause that God furnished his people with so great a number of prophecies upon this head, his design being thereby to give us such solid grounds for our faith, by granting to it all these supports, that nothing might be able to shake it.

But because all of them may be referred to certain heads, and that an explication of the chief of them is sufficient to illustrate the rest, I shall stop there now.

I begin therefore with the character of the time in which the Messiah was to appear, and in which Jesus Christ did actually come into the world. And it being utterly impossible for any man to choose the time of his birth, any more than to choose an illustrious forerunner, or a certain place where, or a certain family of which he is to be born, and much less of a virgin for his mother; these characters may satisfy

us, that all those that ever pretended to the title of the Messiah, could not reasonably do it.

CHAP. V.

That the Time pointed out by the Prophets for the coming of the Messiah, is the very Time in which Jesus Christ appeared to the World.

I HAVE made it appear, in the third part of these Reflections, that the oracle of Jacob, Gen. xlix. 10. *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come,* contains a formal character of the time in which our Saviour was to appear. I am therefore at present to shew, that the Jews at that time had wholly lost the authority of which they had been possessed for so many ages, which will most evidently appear from these four Reflections on the history of the Gospel itself.

The first is on the birth of Jesus Christ, which happened precisely at the time when Augustus had ordered that all the subjects of the Roman empire should be enrolled; when we find that Joseph and the Blessed Virgin went to *Bethlehem,* their own city, to list their names in the register of the Roman magistrate, which is an authentic proof of the servitude of that people to the Romans.

It will not be amiss here to take notice, first, of Moses's numbering the people by Divine authority; secondly, of the numbering which David undertook, and for which he was exemplarily punished by God. Now, as God caused the people to be numbered, to shew that they were all his subjects, and as David numbered them with the same respect, so we must consider this action of Augustus was a public testi-

mony of his sovereignty over the Jews, who were subdued by Pompey.

When Tertullian appealed to the public registers of the Roman empire, in his apologetic addressed to the Roman magistrate who resided at *Carthage*, he gave a sufficient evidence that we have no reason to suspect the relation of the Evangelists. One may join to this, the manner of the relation of these facts which the Evangelists give us; as, for instance, in the baptism of our Lord, they determine the years in which they were done, not only by the year of the high priest, but also by those of Augustus and Tiberius, &c.

The second reflection may be made upon the character of one of the Apostles of Jesus Christ, Levi, or Matthew; who, before our Saviour made choice of him, was a publican: and it seems as if our Saviour had on purpose taken him from that employ, to be one of his Disciples, to give a real instance, and such a one as went every where along with him, that the Jews by paying tribute to the Roman empire, had wholly lost their temporal authority, which was to continue till the coming of the Messiah.

Here also may be made a third reflection, which is very natural, upon a passage related by the Evangelists. They come and ask our Saviour, Whether it were lawful to yield obedience to the Romans? For since God had chosen this people, and had given them judges and princes of his own choosing, they had always an extreme aversion for any foreign domination: of this we have an illustrious example at the time of the siege of *Jerusalem*, when, notwithstanding the remonstrances by Jeremy, yet they could not consent to submit. This is that with which they are upbraided, Ezra iv. verse 19. Neither were they more content with this their state of bondage, at the time of our Saviour; and some of their zealots took this occasion to tempt our Saviour, that they might make him odious, which side soever he should take.

Their question is, *Whether it be lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar?* To which he answers, with a Divine wisdom, *Render to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's;* which words being joined with the money that he made them produce, which was stamped with the emperor's image, do evidently shew that the Romans were sovereign lords in *Judea:* it is known that the coining of money is the undoubted mark of the sovereignty of that prince who makes it pass for current.

But if we must give some further light to the foregoing reflections, we need only observe the manner of our Saviour's suffering, as it is described to us. The Jews do agree, as may be seen in the *Jerusalem* Talmud,* that criminal judgment was taken away from them forty years before the destruction of *Jerusalem;* and the gospel supposeth the same thing. The Jews did not put Jesus Christ to death, but they carried him to Pilate, and demanded that he might be crucified. When Pilate said, *Shall I crucify your king?* they answer, *We have no other king but Cæsar;* which confession was the confession of the whole Jewish nation, who were assembled at the feast of passover. In short, one sees, that accordingly the Roman magistrate passed sentence upon him. He was scourged before they led him to be crucified, which was a punishment amongst the Romans. His body is not taken from the cross but by permission from Pilate; and the Roman soldiers are those dogs, that is, profane heathens, who enclosed him and tormented him, according to the description which David has made, Psalm xxii.

The Jews have here but one answer to make, which God's former dealing with that people seems somewhat to countenance; which is, that as their seventy years captivity under the Babylonian empire

* Sanhedr. fol. 24. 2.

did not hinder the deferring of the accomplishment of that prophecy of the *sceptre's not departing from Judah*, for some centuries after the said captivity, so neither is it necessary to suppose that the Messiah was to succeed immediately upon the ending of the kingdom of the Maccabees, and upon the loss of their liberty under Pompey.

But here is a very great difference; for, first, during the Babylonish captivity, God still preserved amongst them some form of government, the great lords of the country being chiefly carried away captives, whilst the poorest and most miserable were left behind.

Secondly, the captivity lasted only 70 years, whereas this last dispersion hath lasted above 1600.

Thirdly, the first captivity did not at all abolish those necessary marks whereby the lawful lords of *Judea* might be distinguished; those that were of the tribe of *Judah*, as well as those of other tribes, were very well known, though they were not in possession of the kingdom: whereas now every thing is confounded amongst them; and if one looks into Christian records, he may find that many of the kindred of Jesus Christ were put to death, because they could pretend to the throne of *Judea*.

Moreover, during the captivity of *Babylon*, they had Prophets amongst them who expressly foretold the end of it; whereas, nothing of that kind has yet been since the last destruction of *Jerusalem*, since which time no prophet has appeared amongst them, that advantage being transferred to the Christians, some of which, who next succeeded our Saviour, did foretel the most remarkable events that were to follow to the end of the world.

But if any one should be so nice as to call in question the reasons of the difference here alleged; at least the Jews will find nothing to object against the prophecy of Daniel, concerning the week at the end of which the Messiah was to appear, and afterwards

to be cut off. In short, if it be true that Jesus Christ was born under the empire of Augustus, it is no less certain that he entered upon his ministry in the fifteenth year of Tiberius, and was crucified the nineteenth of his reign, that is, in the midst of the four hundred eighty-seventh year from the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, that is, before the end of the last week pointed out by Daniel, as I have shewed in the eighth chapter of the third part of this book.

CHAP. VI.

That Jesus Christ had precisely such a Forerunner as the Prophets had described to precede the Messiah.

ONE will easily judge that it was agreeable to the greatness of the Messiah, and the contemptible state wherein he was to appear to the world, that he should have a forerunner; accordingly, we find Isaiah expressing himself in this manner, the year of the world 3292, almost 700 years before the birth of our Saviour. Malachi had expressly foretold the same in his prophecy, about 420 years before his appearance. If this be once granted, it is easy to conceive that the son of a priest, living without any worldly splendor, and dying a violent death, though very glorious for him, was a proper forerunner to that Jesus who himself was to be crucified.

Our business therefore is to inquire whether the characters which the Prophets give to the forerunner of the Messiah, do agree with John the Baptist, in whom the Christians maintain that this prophecy of Malachi was fulfilled. This may be easily made out.

First, John the Baptist was miraculously conceived, at a time when his parents could not promise themselves any such thing: the angel Gabriel, who

had declared to Daniel the coming of the Messiah, by pointing out to him the number of weeks, was the messenger of the conception of this forerunner of the Messiah. Several things passed at his birth, and at the time when they gave him his name, which were very strange, and which could not but be generally known, as well because of the accident which happened to Zacharias in the temple, as of his quality, being a priest.

Secondly, the extraordinary life which St. John led, being a Nazarite, ought to be carefully considered. He lived in a solitary place, as the Prophet Elijah did before him.

Thirdly, his preaching also had the character of that ancient Prophet, being thundering, as his was: he neither spared great men, nor those who had the reputation of the greatest sanctity; as the Pharisees particularly, whose pride and hypocrisy he touched to the quick.

Fourthly, he set forth the coming of the Messiah as at the door; *The kingdom of heaven*, said he, *is at hand;* alluding to the seventh of Daniel, where the kingdom of the Messiah is represented as a kingdom which was to come down from heaven, whereas the former empires had their rise from the earth.

In short, nothing could be more illustrious than the ministry of this great man.

He baptized publicly, for the space of one year, such as came to him, solemnly engaging them to repentance, in hopes of the sudden appearance of the Messiah. This ceremony, which was an imitation of their custom of initiating proselytes in the Jewish religion, was plainly an essay to establish a new religion, or at least to reform those corruptions which time had introduced into the Jewish religion.

In a word, we find him so generally followed, that the great council of the Jews thought fit to send deputies to him, to know whether he were not the Messiah they expected: this great man was so far

from abusing the great credit he had gained, that he solemnly protested that he was only the forerunner of the Messiah, who was already come, but was as yet concealed in the midst of them.

His glory became so illustrious, that it stirred up jealousy in the mind of Herod, who cast him into prison, and at last caused his head to be cut off in the castle of *Macherom*, to satisfy the lewd Herodias, whose marriage, or rather incest, with Herod, he had reproved.

Before St. John was beheaded, he sends his disciples to Jesus Christ, to inform himself whether he were the Messiah; which our Saviour proves to them by the miracles which he wrought in their presence, and by the testimony of the Prophet Isaiah, which St. John had before alleged as a proof his call.

All these facts were so illustrious, and so well known, that St. John constantly passed for a great Prophet amongst the Jews, the Pharisees themselves not daring to question it: he received public deputations from the Jews, who demanded the reason of his ministry; and he himself sent one to Jesus Christ, that his Disciples might be acquainted with him, and that they might give him a second public testimony; and last of all, he dies a glorious martyr for his purity, after he had made a vast number of Disciples, who were so well dispersed in all places, that St. Luke tells us, in the Acts, that some of them were found in *Asia*, who received the Gospel and the gifts of the Spirit, in which they had been as it were initiated already by the baptism of St. John.

It appears afterwards that St. John was looked upon as the forerunner of the Messiah: Jesus Christ saith he was the greatest of all the Prophets: and when Herod heard of the reputation of Jesus Christ, he supposed that St. John was raised from the dead.

The Jews not conceiving that John the Baptist was the forerunner of the Messiah, because they under

stood the prophecy of Malachi literally* which also made the LXX add to the text the word *Thisbite*, in that passage of Malachi; therefore Jesus Christ declares, that it was indeed he of whom Malachi had spoken.

I acknowledge that John the Baptist did not do any miracle; but then he uttered, 1. so plain an oracle concerning the miraculous effusion of the gifts of the Holy Ghost upon the Disciples, that we find nothing so great or so clear in all the ancient prophecies: *He that comes after me*, saith he, *shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.*

2. He gave a second oracle, though not so plain as the former, concerning the destruction of *Jerusalem; Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will burn up the chaff with fire.*

These two oracles contain the end of the old dispensation, and the beginning of the new: the miraculous gifts of the Spirit were given to facilitate the publishing of the Gospel among the Gentiles; and the destruction of *Jerusalem*, and of the temple, happened as well to punish the crime which the Jews had committed when they put the Messiah to death, as to take away all their pretences of believing that the Messiah was not come, who was to appear whilst that temple stood.

But, before I conclude this chapter, I must observe three or four things, which are very necessary to confirm the authority of the testimony which this forerunner of the Messiah hath given to Jesus Christ.

It is a maxim amongst the Jews, that he who is acknowledged for a Prophet, may confirm the authority of another, by attesting him to be a true Prophet.† And this is that which St. John did to Christ; he was generally accounted a Prophet, and he at-

* Mal. iv. 5. † Maimond. de fundam. legis.

tested that Jesus Christ was so. This was that which confounded the elders of the Jews, when they demanded of our Saviour, By what authority John acted? Jesus Christ answered their question with another, Whether St. John had a call from God?

The first observation therefore is, That we cannot accuse him of acting underhand with Jesus Christ, for we do not find any correspondence kept up between them: one of them was the son of a priest, the other of a carpenter's wife; the one dwelt in *Judea*, the other in *Galilee;* the one concealed himself, whilst the other's reputation had got him a great many Disciples. The Disciples of the one were very jealous of the Disciples of the other, and endeavoured to inspire their master with the jealousy that possessed themselves.

The second is, That the Disciples of Jesus are the persons that wrote the history of John the Baptist, which they do as those who were concerned for his glory and reputation; though at first they did not stand in the least by him, but rather by that means inflamed Herod's hatred against them, who contributed to the death of St. John, as well as of Jesus Christ.

The third is, That when St. John was beheaded, who never had any correspondence with Jesus Christ, it is extravagant to conceive, that the Disciples of Jesus Christ should have forged the testimony which they say this great man gave to Christ, because this would have been to employ the authority of a man who, never having wrought any miracles, and being long since beheaded by the order of Herod, seemed to be quite forgotten.

The fourth is, That it is not probable that they could ever entertain a design of imposing on the world in such a manner as this, which related to public facts known to all *Judea*, to all the priests, yea, to the whole nation assembled at their public feasts, to Herod the king, and to the Disciples of John

themselves, who would not have been wanting to refute and convince them; whereas, on the contrary, we see, that by the disposition which St. John had wrought in them, they were easily won to the faith of Christ. This is evident, from the example of Apollos, a Disciple of John the Baptist's Disciples, who became afterwards so excellent a preacher of the Christian religion.

CHAP. VII.

That Jesus Christ was born of the Family of David, then reduced to a mean Condition, as had been already foretold by the Prophets.

WE have considered the time in which our Saviour was to be born; let us now speak of the family from whence he was to proceed. It has been proved already, that this promise was made to the family of David by Nathan the Prophet, 2 Sam. vii. 12. 1 Chron. xvii. 11., in the year of the world 2959. David repeats this his hope, Psalm lxxxix. 4. and cxxxii. 11. And about the year of the world 3292, the Prophet Isaiah adds further, that the Messiah should be in a despicable condition.

There are four things which fully confirm this truth.

The first is, the kindred which was between Elizabeth and the Blessed Virgin, whence it appeared that her relations were of the tribe of *Judah*, and that she was known to be of the family of David.

One ought to observe here a thing, which though at first sight seems to be of small importance, yet we cannot but think that St. Luke wrote it without design; and that is, the journey of the Blessed Virgin to one of the cities of *Judah*, after her conception, to visit Elisabeth her kinswoman, the wife of

Zachariah, and the mother of John the Baptist. I shall not mention at present any other reasons of this journey, which may seem to be worthy of the Divine wisdom; and so I shall only observe at present, that this visit was made to Elisabeth in a city of *Judah*, which is a demonstrative proof that Jesus Christ was of the family of David, and consequently of that of *Judah;* so that this is far from being made use of as an objection against it, as some have done.

It is well known, that the priests had leave to take a wife of what tribe they pleased: but who sees not at first sight, that it was natural for a priest, dwelling in one of the cities of *Judah*, to marry in that tribe amongst whom he lived; besides that the priests had of a long time affected to make alliances with that tribe, before any other.

The second thing which ought to be joined to this, is, the manner of Elisabeth's expressing herself to the Blessed Virgin, considering her as bearing the Messiah in her womb; and upon this account she called her *the Mother of my Lord*, alluding to Psalm cx.

The third is, that the Blessed Virgin, in her song, where she speaks of herself as the person in whom the promise made to Abraham was accomplished, Luke i. verse 54, 55., which promise concerned the Messiah, she sets forth herself as heiress to the kings of *Judah*, and chosen before any of her ancestors, notwithstanding all their glory; *He hath put down*, saith she, *the mighty from their seats, and hath exalted them of low degree.*

The fourth is, that Zachariah the priest, who was well acquainted with the Blessed Virgin, at whose house she had been during the first three months of her being with child, and who could not be ignorant of her lineage, always owned her to be of the family of David. It is evident that he looked upon the Blessed Virgin as the mother of the Messiah, as well

as Elisabeth his wife. He seems to have considered the infant that was to be born of her, as the Redeemer promised to Abraham, and the Blessed Virgin as the heiress of David; and therefore saith, *That God had raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David.* There can be nothing more convincing than this observation; for, first, Zachariah was a priest, that is, one of those to whom the care of the genealogies of the Jews was committed. 2. He appears to have been very well versed in the prophecies which fixed the Messiah to the family of David. 3. He considered his son as the forerunner of the Messiah, when he proposed that the oracle of Malachi should be fulfilled in that son whom God had so miraculously bestowed upon him. 4. He needed only have examined the agreements of her marriage, and he would then certainly know whether the Blessed Virgin was not of another tribe, which would have cured him of any possible illusion.

In short, St. Luke observes very exactly, that this journey of the Virgin to her kinswoman, and all the circumstances which prove the Blessed Virgin to have been of the family of David, were things well known throughout all the hill-country of *Judea*, that it might not be pretended that this important fact was any ways obscure.

But, secondly, this genealogy of Jesus Christ is carried up to David and Judah; and it is visible that this was a thing exactly known, especially since Jesus Christ always passed for the son of David, blind men themselves calling him so.

A third thing to be considered is, the Blessed Virgin's going to *Bethlehem*, to be there enrolled, according to the decree of Augustus Cæsar. There had been several numberings of the people; the first was at the appointment of God himself; the second was by an order from David; and in both, an exact distinction was made between the tribes themselves,

and the families of each tribe; and one sees that the same was observed in this last register, which was made by Augustus's decree in the 4000th year of the world.

Joseph and Mary went up to *Bethlehem*, which was the seat of David's family: nothing appears here of design or affectation: they made no stay at *Bethlehem*, and the occasion that brought them thither was absolutely strange and unlooked for; and yet it was certainly an accomplishment of that prophecy of Micah, chap. v. verse 2. *But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah*, &c.

This remark upon the decree of Augustus is of great moment, because thereby the Virgin's being of the family of David appears to be the most indisputable truth in the world, as having been owned first by the whole family of Judah for three months; secondly, by the genealogy which subsisted entire, as the Talmudists themselves grant in the treatise *de Sponsal.* chap. iv. sect. 5. where they testify that the genealogy of the royal family was without difficulty; thirdly, by the public testimony of all their kindred, who met in a body before the Roman magistrate.

The fourth remark is, that when Herod knew of the birth of the Messiah at *Bethlehem*, where, by the confession of the Jews, he was to be born, he would have involved Jesus Christ in the massacre which swept away the innocent children, if the same Providence which brought him to *Bethlehem*, to demonstrate that he was of the house of David, had not withdrawn him from thence, to preserve him from that tyrant who was afraid of being cast from his throne by one of David's heirs.

The fifth is, that Jesus Christ did not only often allude to the place of his birth, in calling himself *the Bread come down from Heaven*, the word *Bethlehem* signifying the House of Bread, but he con-

stantly owned himself for the son of David. Upon this it is that he grounds the objection which he makes to the Jews; *How is it that David calls the Messiah his Lord?* And indeed this fact was so constantly owned by all, that even persons who were possessed with devils did not dispute it, as may be seen in the Evangelists.

The sixth is, that though two of the Evangelists set down the genealogy of our Saviour with some difference, yet the Jews never took occasion from thence to question Jesus Christ's descent from David; his Apostles always building on that foundation; which may be seen as a thing taken for granted in St. Peter's sermon, Acts ii. and in the epistles of St. Paul, where we find our Saviour always styled *the Son of David* according to the flesh.

To these already mentioned we may add the three following observations. The first is, that if the genealogy of our Saviour had not been distinctly known, the Apostles would never have troubled themselves to have set it down; much less would they have placed it in the front of their books, as knowing that the beginnings of books are always more examined than the ends, and would certainly be so by a people who always stuck very close to their genealogies. In short, either the genealogies of the Jews were at that time as confused as they are at present, and so they could not have served as characters to discover the Messiah by; in which case the Apostles would have contented themselves to have hinted that Jesus Christ always passed for the son of David, as they have done in several places of their writings without giving us the whole series of his pedigree; or else they were at that time distinctly known, in which case it was the easiest thing in the world to have confuted them.

The second is, that the differences which are found between the genealogy of Jesus Christ set down by St. Matthew, and that by St. Luke, is s

far from giving us an occasion to doubt of the Apostles' faithfulness in this matter, that indeed it is a new proof of their exactness in a matter of so great importance; for it can scarcely be imagined but that, in so long a series of ages, there must have been some of the ancestors of our Saviour in whom that law took place, which obliged the younger brother to marry the widow of his elder brother deceased without issue, and so to raise up seed to him, which gave occasion to a genealogy not natural, but legal, the children bearing the name of the deceased elder brother, and possessing his estate. Now the Evangelists have set down both these genealogies exactly, which is an invincible argument of their care and fidelity.

The third is, that it was so much the more necessary to make this remark in the genealogy of the Messiah, because, as we have observed elsewhere, it was with relation to the desire of giving birth to the Messiah, or of having children which might live under his empire, that God at first permitted this kind of incest with the widow of a deceased brother, which otherwise was so severely prohibited by the law.

As to the low estate to which the family of David was then reduced, it is visible that David and Solomon reigned with great glory; but Rehoboam succeeding them, ten tribes fell from him to Jeroboam, in the year of the world 3029; and the posterity of Rehoboam was afterwards dethroned by Nebuchadnezzar, who carried Zedechiah the king into captivity in the year 3416.

After their return from captivity, they were entirely thrust from the throne: the priests at first governing that nation; the Maccabees, who were of the family of Levi, reigning in *Judea*, from the return of the captivity of *Babylon*, until Herod the Edomite, who was made master of *Judea* by the favour of the Romans.

2. The family of David was at that time removed from their ancient seat, and was now fixed at *Nazareth* where Providence seems to have removed them from *Bethlehem*, to take away that object of Herod's jealousy, which would have offended him; as we see it did, when the wise men acquainted him with the birth of Jesus, which obliged him to make a diligent inquiry after the place where the Messiah was to be born; that Messiah whom he conceived to be a prince, who would rob him of the sovereignty to which he was raised.

In the third place, the Blessed Virgin was betrothed to a carpenter. Justin Martyr tells us that Jesus Christ made ploughs. See what the heirs of the kings of *Judah* were reduced to.

Fourthly, when she came to *Bethlehem*, she lodged in an inn, her kindred being not in a condition to afford her better accommodation.

It appears that the Divine Providence was very careful in executing this design. There were some decays of the family of David, which the Blessed Virgin expresses in her song. She was descended from the younger brothers of deposed princes, and reduced to a private state: she speaks of nothing but of lowness and meanness, not only in a way of humility, but to demonstrate the fulfilling of the prophecy concerning the throne of Jesse.

But that this might appear more evidently, and confirmed by the law, as it was her duty to present her son in the temple after the seventh day, with an offering, so she does not offer what is prescribed to the rich and wealthy, but an offering which is appropriated by God in the law to poor people, as appears Lev. xii.

One sees, by the marriage feast at *Cana* in *Galilee*, that the kindred of Jesus Christ were not very rich: their wanting of wine on such an occasion was no great mark of plenty.

One sees also, that Jesus Christ frequently represents himself as not having where to rest his head: on the cross he recommends his mother to one of his Disciples, and was himself maintained by those who followed him.

CHAP. VIII.

That Jesus Christ was conceived by the Virgin Mary, without any Operation of Man.

As this article is one of the most important of our religion, so it is well worth our attentive consideration. We may take notice here, that, according to the observation of Justin Martyr,* the fable of Perseus took its rise from the prophecy of Isaiah. However, that prophecy being very express, according to the translation of the LXX, we are to consider how it was accomplished. It will not be enough here to say, that ordinarily extreme poverty is a sufficient bar against the suspicion of adultery; and therefore we desire the reader only to call to mind the observations set down in the second chapter of the second part of these Reflections on the Books of the law of Moses. For,

1. Polygamy and divorces were very frequent in the time of Jesus Christ, as appears from several passages of the Gospel, where God was pleased to give us examples thereof.

2. God was willing to give us instances of his severity against adulteresses, amongst which those were reckoned who suffered themselves to be defiled after they were betrothed. We have an example hereof in the eighth chapter of the Gospel according

* Dial. cum Typh. p. 297. Isa. 5.

to St. John, which I have illustrated in the fourth chapter of this fourth part.

3. It appears that the same laws which engaged parents to preserve the virginity of their daughters, did continue, and were still observed by the Jews, as well as those other laws which constituted the body of their religion: when Jesus Christ upbraids the Jews for having changed the true sense of the law, yet he never reproaches them upon this account.

4. The relation set down in the eighth chapter of St. John, makes it appear that the waters of jealousy still retained their virtue; that which Jesus Christ writ on the ground being probably nothing else but the curses which the law denounced against the woman that should violate her honour.

I have made it very evident, in the twentieth chapter of my second part, what was the use of those laws concerning the marks of virginity, to prevent any doubts that might arise concerning the same: it remains now to consider the several passages of Evangelists, and to see what proofs we can find there to confirm this point, that Mary was indeed a virgin when she conceived Jesus Christ, and how we may answer the objections which the enemies of Christianity make against this truth.

The Evangelists tell us that this remarkable fact was declared by the Angel Gabriel, who had before foretold to Daniel the coming of the Messiah, and signified the exact time thereof. The conception of Isaac by a barren mother, as well as that of Samuel and John the Baptist, had been already declared in the same manner; and one miracle ought to serve as a preparation for the belief of a greater.

When the Disciples of Jesus Christ speak of the fact, they speak of it as a thing known throughout all *Jerusalem*, and which had no relation to their master. Besides, we know the jealousy that was between the Disciples of St. John and those of our Saviour.

But we have a further account besides of the message of an Angel to Joseph, after he had perceived that his betrothed wife was with child; for when he was ready to divorce her, either by exposing her to the rigour of the Divine law, Deut. xxii. 23., or else by exempting her from that extremity, he is diverted from his intention by this warning from heaven. In all which we meet with nothing but what is very probable; for Joseph expresses his hatred and dislike, as conceiving her to be debauched, and was resolved not to receive her, but by an order from heaven.

Moreover it is very remarkable, that we find all things recited in such a manner, as it was necessary they should come to pass, on supposition that the Messiah was to be born of a virgin of the house of David.

For, first, we find this event appeared incredible to the person herself who was designed to effect it, because she could not easily make the application at first.

2. It caused exceeding joy to the person who saw herself chosen by God to fulfil so glorious a promise, whereby the family of David was to be restored to its ancient lustre. This is evident from the hymn of the Blessed Virgin; which if we compare with the Psalms of David, we shall see that that family still retained all the piety of their ancestors, with all those signs of acknowledgment which an event of such a nature did justly require.

3. It appears that Joseph acquiesced in this truth, he who otherwise did not seem very credulous, till he was instructed from heaven concerning a matter so rare and difficult to be conceived. He retires for some time into *Egypt*, and affords Mary and her son all the service they could reasonably expect from him.

St. Jerome alleges three reasons why it was needful for the Blessed Virgin to be betrothed to Joseph.*

* Contr. Helvidium.

1. That the original of the Blessed Virgin might be proved by the pedigree of Joseph, to whom she was related.

2. That, according to the law of Moses, she might not be stoned as an adulteress.

3. That in her flight into *Egypt* she might have the comfort of a guardian rather than a husband.

Neither can any thing be opposed to the belief of these matters, but some very weak conjectures: the first is, that her being contracted doth something obscure the distinct notion of virginity; and secondly, that the Blessed Virgin did always pass for the wife of Joseph, even according to the style of Jesus Christ himself; and lastly, that the relation which the Evangelists give of this matter, was not known till long after the death of Jesus Christ.

But it is an easy matter to satisfy the mind of any reasonable reader in this thing. It was necessary that the Blessed Virgin should be betrothed:

1. To secure her life, which would have been in danger if she had been delivered whilst she was reputed to be a virgin; for she would have been accused, of whoredom, and consequently have been put to death.

2. It was necessary she should be betrothed, and pass for the lawful wife of Joseph, that her son might not be banished from the congregation of Israel, as a bastard, in the rigour of the law.

As for the other objection, I easily grant that the Blessed Virgin always passed for the wife of Joseph: she herself saith, *I and thy father sought thee.* But withal, at that very time, Jesus Christ unveiled that mystery in the presence of all the Jews, maintaining that he was the Son of God, in whose house he was at that time: it was at a solemn feast of the Jews, where the whole nation was assembled, and in the midst of an assembly of their Doctors, that he

declared the temple to be the house of his Father, as he afterwards constantly called it.

We find him, at another time, declaring the same in the presence of his family at *Cana* in *Galilee: Woman, what have I to do with thee?* saith he to the Blessed virgin;* to put her in mind of some passages which could not but preserve in her a very particular respect for him.

He gives yet a further degree of light into this matter, when, his mother seeking to come at him, he saith, *Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?* that is, kinsmen. It is probable that Joseph was dead before our Saviour entered upon his ministry; however, his making no mention of his reputed father, shews how careful he was to avoid any thing that might obscure his miraculous birth.

Last of all, it is very considerable, that this passage being not the only character which was to distinguish the Messiah from all others, but was to be confirmed by the miracles of Jesus Christ, by his resurrection, and those other proofs of his Divine nature, it was at first not much insisted on, because there was a necessity that it should continue veiled for some time, upon the account of the frequent apparitions of Angels, and of God himself in a human form, that so the truth of his humanity should be established by his life and death, before the publication of his miraculous conception.

For it is certain that the Apostles preached up this truth, and that the Evangelists had put it in writing before the destruction of the Jewish commonwealth; and yet we do not find that it was ever contested. The Evangelists describe the methods which the Jews took to make the resurrection of Christ to be doubted of, and to slight his miracles; and do we think they would not as well have given us the objections of the

* John ii. 4.

Jews against a thing of which till then never any instance had been known in the world?

I know very well that some of the ancients have told us that the Jews were offended, that the Blessed Virgin, after she was delivered of our Saviour, should seat herself in the place appointed for virgins; and that, because Zacharias the priest maintained her in so doing, he was thereupon killed by them between the temple and the altar, with which our Saviour upbraids the Jews. I know also that they affirm that she was forced to confirm the truth of her virginity, by submitting herself to a search of matrons: yet I cannot believe that she ever underwent any such examination, of which the silence of the Evangelists, and St. Luke's in particular, fully convinces me; and therefore I am inclined to think that no such objection was ever made against her.

In the mean time, it is well worth our noting, 1. That the Blessed Virgin had Zachariah the priest as an examiner and witness of her behaviour from the beginning, at whose house she abode during the first months of her being with child, and who publicly divulged the miraculous birth of his own son, and his leaping in his mother's womb at the salutation of the Blessed Virgin.

2. That the Blessed Virgin lived many years after the passion of our Saviour, that she might undergo and answer any accusations of that nature.

3. That she also had for witnesses of the miracles which attended her conception, all the Disciples of St. John, as well as those of Jesus Christ, though the Disciples of St. John did not agree with the Disciples of Jesus Christ.

4. That what she declared of herself, was not a fact which had no traces whereby it might be examined in the Old Testament.

5. That the Jews had thirty years to examine the several particulars which had relation to the Messiah,

and the miraculous manner of his birth, at the time when she published this particular passage of her life.

6. That we cannot call in question the veracity of the Blessed Virgin in the account which she gives us of what concerned herself, of which no witness could be produced, forasmuch as the accomplishment of that part of her prophecy, that *all nations should call her blessed*, clearly shews that she had received the spirit of prophecy; no more than we can suspect any forgeries in the relations of other Prophets, though we have no other testimony concerning them, but that of the Prophets themselves.

CHAP. IX.

That Jesus Christ lived and preached after the same manner as the Prophets had forctold the Messiah should do.

I HAVE clearly shewn that Jesus Christ was born of the posterity of Adam, by Seth, by Noah, by Abraham, by Isaac, by Jacob, by Judah, by David, as it was foretold of the Messiah by the most ancient oracles, the increase of which I have already taken notice of in my third part.

I have afterwards shewed, that Jesus Christ was born of a virgin, whereby those oracles, *The seed of the woman shall bruise thy head*,* and, *A virgin shall conceive and bear a son*,† seemed to be clearly accomplished. Let us now see, according to those oracles, what kind of person the Messiah was to be, from his birth to his death, according to those ideas which the Prophets have given us.

Moses expressly tells us, Deut. xviii. that the Mes-

* Gen. iii. 15. † Isai. vii. 14.

siah was to resemble him; *The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet like unto me:** which place, as I have observed before, has been so constantly applied to the Messiah, that it appears that not only John the Baptist, when he sent his Disciples to Jesus Christ, Philip speaking to Nathanael, and the Disciples when they were asked by our Saviour who he was, but also the Samaritan woman, understood it so without the least hesitation, and said, That when the Messiah should come, he would tell them all things.

In short, one sees an exact proportion between Moses and Jesus Christ; not only because our Saviour was saved in his infancy from the hand of Herod, and from a river of blood, like another Moses; or because *Egypt* served for a retreat to him, as Moses had hid himself in *Arabia;* or because he was rejected of his brethren, those of Nazareth, who would have thrown him headlong from a rock, because he declared himself to be the promised deliverer and Messiah, by applying to himself the words of Isaiah, *The spirit of the Lord is upon me*, &c.

Neither shall I now take notice of his being despised and disowned by his brethren, and called a Galilean, whereas indeed he was of *Judea;* for indeed the Messiah was to be treated as a Nazarene, that is, a contemptible person, and a man of no consideration: for we may find that because our Saviour was brought up at Nazareth, though he was born at *Bethlehem*, he was therefore looked upon as a person incapable of any thing that was great; *Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?* said Nathanael to Philip;† and the Pharisees to the officers whom they had sent to take Jesus, *Search and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no Prophet*, much less the great Prophet, the Messiah, who by way of eminence is so called. It is upon this account that he was called a

* Deut. xviii. 15. † John i. 46.

Galilean, not only by the Heathens, but by his own Disciples too; for the word Galilean seems to have been a name for one of an impure extraction, because many of other nations dwelt among the Jews in *Galilee*. But I shall take notice of several other more important resemblances between them, and such as have relation to the ministry of Moses rather than his person, by referring all to his preaching, his miracles, his predictions, and some other heads of that nature.

First, then, Jesus Christ, that he might at first maintain the character of the Messiah, appears in the temple. John the Baptist had heard him called the Son of God, by a very peculiar witness, a voice from heaven. Wherefore we see that, at his first entry upon his ministry, he drives out those that profaned the house of God, whom he called his Father, with a scourge; and this he did at the feast of the passover, before the whole nation of the Jews.*

Here is another character of the Messiah; he was to begin the exercise of his ministerial functions, in the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulon, according to the prophecy of Isaiah:† and this our Saviour exactly accomplished by his beginning to preach at *Nazareth*, which was in the tribe of Zebulon; and he conversed much at *Capernaum*, which was in the tribe of Naphtali, according to the observation of the Evangelists.

But I proceed to consider some circumstances of his ministry. Isaiah had foretold that the Messiah was to preach the Gospel to the poor; which Jesus applies to himself in the synagogue at *Nazareth*, declaring that in his person that prophecy was fulfilled; viz. *The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, wherefore the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek*, &c.§

* John ii. 13, 14, 15, &c. † Isai. ix. 1.
§ Isai. lxi. 1.

The choice which he made of his Disciples from among the meanest of the people, and the basest of the crowd which followed him wherever he went, ought to pass for a sufficient accomplishment, of this prophecy.

The Messiah, according to the representation which Isaiah gives us of him, was to publish the tidings of the remission of sins; and was not this that which Jesus Christ did, during the course of his ministry.

The Messiah was to preach the remission of sin, in such a manner, as that he might dry up the fountain of it, at the same time, in calling men to the study of sanctification: this was admirably performed by Jesus Christ; 2. In correcting those abuses which the Jewish Doctors had introduced into the law; 2. In declaring that the effect of sanctification was to be looked for in the heart, rather than in the eyes or hands.

One may see afterwards, 1. That he knew the heart of man; which proved that he made it. This he testifies upon several occasions, in the answers which he made to those that spoke to him, and indeed in all his discourses, which were suited to the dispositions of the heart of those to whom he addressed them.

2. That he made use of parables, which are moral lessons, very easy indeed, but withal fitter for the subject than fables, and more worthy of God; parables, also, which were so ordinary and familiar amongst the Jews, that we find most of them at this day in the writings of the Jews, though they apply them to no other use.

3. That he descended to particulars, without using any thing mean, which men are apt to do when they divide things minutely.

4. That he forgot no one precept of morality.

5. That he examined all the duties of religion, and made them infinitely recommendable by suggesting such excellent motives.

After all, we are to consider four things in the preaching of our Saviour, which will fully prove that he was the Messiah.

1. That his doctrine appeared to be wholly Divine: he had never been brought up at the feet of any Doctor; but had his breeding in a carpenter's shop.

2. That no crime was ever objected to him, notwithstanding that he upbraided the Pharisees with theirs; but he supported his doctrine by the holiness of his conversation.

3. That he insensibly disposed the people to receive him as the Messiah, by the characters which God had given of him in the Prophets.

4. He prepared his Disciples and his auditors to expect that one day the Gentiles should enter into the church.

In short, can any thing be so surprising, as to see a man who had lived thirty years as the son of a carpenter, to declare himself all at once a Doctor, to preach publicly, to censure the Doctors of his nation, to speak of the law and prophets with more depth and authority than all that ever went before him? Who can, without surprise, conceive that a man of the lowest quality should, from a carpenter's shop, come and determine questions about the law, and tread under his feet the authority of all the great Rabbins every where, only by an *I say unto you*, so that none was able to contradict him! Certainly, when one sees our Saviour upon the mount explaining and defending the moral part of the law from the corruptions into which it was fallen, he appears not only as great as Moses on mount *Sinai*, but even as God himself, when he published his laws to that his ancient people.

Neither ought any one to have less admiration for that perfect innocence which shone through the whole course of his life. What crime had they to charge him with, when they put him to death, he who accu-

sed his enemies of so many? *Who of you*, saith he, *accuses me of sin?* We find him only accused of words ill understood, which they were resolved to misinterpret: his saying, *That if they destroyed that temple, he would rebuild it in three days*, was laid to his charge as a crime; and yet these words could not have been heightened into crimes, if they had been spoken in the same sense which they put upon them. This was an essential character of the Messiah, who was to be the restorer of holiness, according to the idea which the Prophets gave of him.

I should take notice afterwards that our Saviour, in his sermons, did by little and little dispose the minds of his auditors and Disciples to conceive and believe him to be the promised Messiah. The first act of his public ministry, was an effect of his zeal for the holiness of a temple consecrated to his Father: he drove the buyers and sellers out of the temple, at the feast of the passover, which action of his was a solemn profession that he was the Son of God. Soon after, at *Nazareth*, he applies to himself that prophecy of Isaiah, *The spirit of the Lord is upon me*, &c. He explains himself yet more distinctly in *Jerusalem*, at the second passover, which he celebrated during the time of his ministry, that they might understand that he was the Messiah, according to the account which the Evangelists give us; and he explains himself yet more particularly upon John the Baptist's message to him. By which means this truth became already so illustrious, that the multitudes would proclaim him King, that is, publicly own him for the Messiah, and obey him as their rightful Sovereign. And lastly, he explains himself in this matter by a question, when he asked his Disciples, What censures were past upon him in *Judea*, and what they themselves thought of him?*

* Matt. xvi.

In short, it is certain that Jesus prepared the minds of his Disciples to look for the calling of the Gentiles, which also was the character of the Messiah. Jacob had prophesied of old, *To him shall the gathering of the people be.** But I shall pass by the oracles which foretel this matter. What signifies the history of the prodigal, unless it be the calling and the return of the Gentiles? the eldest son (the Jew) being extremely troubled at it. What means that saying of our Saviour, that *he had other sheep*, &c. or his prediction, that *many should come from the east and west, and sit down with Abraham, when the children of the kingdom should be cast forth?* I shall take notice, in another place, of the frequent repetition of such like oracles, and their exact accomplishment. These are sufficient at present to justify the solidity of this last reflection, and the truth of this conclusion at the same time, that if one examines the life and preaching of our Saviour, he may find all those characters by which the promised Messiah might be known. Let us now proceed to the consideration of his miracles.

CHAP. X.

That the Miracles wrought by our Saviour clearly prove that he is the Messiah.

As the Messiah was to be very clearly distinguished from all others by his miracles, and as the Prophet Isaiah, chap. xxxv. sets down the power of working miracles as one of those characters by which he was to be known, so it is of great importance to us, to examine the miracles of our Saviour with great attention, whether they have the character of truth, and

* Gen. xlix. 10.

whether they come up to the idea which the Prophets give us of those wonders which the Messiah was to do.

The Evangelists, who tell us that he wrought almost an infinite number of them, have described more than thirty several sorts of them. He changed water into wine at the wedding at *Cana;* he healed the sick son of a courtier; he delivered one that was possessed in the synagogue at *Capernaum;* he healed St. Peter's mother-in-law; he caused a vast number of fish to be caught; he cured a leper with a word, and with a touch he healed one sick of the palsy, he cured a woman of an inveterate issue of blood, and raised the daughter of a ruler of the Synagogue from the dead; he cured the impotent man at the pool of *Bethesda;* he cured him that had a withered hand; he delivered a possessed person that was blind and dumb; he recovered the centurion's servant, and raised to life the son of the widow of Nain.

Neither are these that follow any less considerable: he restores sight to two blind men, he casts forth a dumb devil, he assuages a tempest by his word, he delivers two possessed persons, and permits the devil to go into the herd of swine of the Gadarenes; he feeds above five thousand persons with two loaves and five fishes; he walks upon the sea, and calmeth a second tempest; he casts forth a devil from a daughter of a woman of *Canaan,* who was possessed; he cures one deaf and dumb; he feeds four thousand persons with seven loaves; he restores sight to a blind man of *Bethsaida;* he casts out a devil, after his Disciples had in vain attempted it; he restores sight to one born blind; he cured a crooked woman; he cures one of the dropsy on the sabbath day; he raises Lazarus from the grave, after he had been dead four days; he heals ten lepers afterwards; he restores sight to a blind man at his entering into *Jericho;* and cures the lame and blind in the temple itself.

There are several characters which assure us of the faithfulness of the Evangelists in these their relations: 1. They wrote these things to convert the Jews before the destruction of *Jerusalem.* 2. They marked the circumstances very exactly; and none could be ignorant of them, since they all went thrice a year up to *Jerusalem.* 3. The facts which they relate were lasting, and such as might be examined. 4. They speak of facts which they suppose that Jesus Christ was willing should be beyond all contest, that they might be better examined. 5. They speak of those facts which they maintain to be the accomplishment of the oracles concerning the Messiah whom the Jews expected.

But there are not fewer characters of truth in the miracles of our Saviour, to buoy them up. The first is, that most of the diseases which Jesus Christ cured, are described as absolutely incurable: this observation is of great moment, as well to discover to us the infinite power exerted by Jesus Christ, as to make known the extraordinary wisdom of the Apostles, who being men without learning, did notwithstanding set down the symptoms of the diseases which their master cured, far beyond what might be expected from their natural capacities.

The second reflection belongs to the subjects upon whom these miracles were wrought; for we scarce find any of them, except his curing St. Peter's mother-in-law, to be wrought upon persons who had the least relation to Jesus Christ: he heals the servant of the high-priest, the son of the ruler of a synagogue, the son of a Roman centurion, and several others.

A third reflection may be drawn from the places where they were done, and from the witnesses that were present. In short, they were wrought in public places, in the midst of cities and synagogues; some in *Judea*, some in *Galilee*, some at *Jerusalem*, at *Nain*, *Sidon*, &c. they were submitted to the examination of the most implacable enemies of Jesus

Christ, the people of the Jews, the Samaritans, and the Gentiles, who dwelt in *Palestina*.

One may add also, that these miracles were of very different kinds, wrought in several places, and with very considerable circumstances, at the most solemn feasts, the passover and pentecost.

One ought to consider also, that *Palestine* was full of those whom our Saviour had cured; and that all the Jews who came up three times in a year to *Jerusalem* could not but take notice of them.

One ought afterwards to observe, that Jesus Christ communicated to his Disciples the power of working miracles in the second year of his ministry, which none else had ever done.

And lastly, it must be observed, that these miracles were lasting; the three dead men, whom our Saviour raised to life again, who were very young, and who in all probability lived longer than decrepit old men, were in the sight of all *Judea;* and other sick and infirm persons, that he had healed, enjoyed life and health. 2. In short, the relation of Christ's miracles, which Pilate sent to Tiberius, sufficiently testifies that they were facts generally known; and, 3. That the certainty of them could so little be contested, that the Jews rather chose to accuse him of doing them by some magical secret, than to dispute the truth of them.

These reflections sufficiently confirm the truth of the Evangelist's relation, and of the miracles of Jesus Christ. To agree to what has been said, we need not refute the folly of those who have compared the miracles falsely attributed to Apollonius Tyanæus, with those of Jesus Christ. One hardly knows at this day whether ever there was such a man as Apollonius; whereas, ever since the Apostles, there have been Christians who have read the history of the miracles of Jesus Christ, and who have believed them after a due examination. Which of Apollonius's disciples was ever so bold as to say to Heathens, as Tertullian did in the second century, in his Apologetic,

Bring to us what possessed persons you please, and we will heal them in the name of Jesus Christ?

But we ought also to add one thing more, That these miracles of Jesus Christ were exactly such as ought to have been made, to prove him to be the Messiah.

1. They were exactly such as Isaiah had foretold concerning the Messiah, chap. xxxv. as may be seen by comparing them with the text.

One ought only to observe, that this character is so peculiar, that it distinguishes the Messiah from all the other Prophets who went before him; for none of those to whom God had given power to work miracles, had either given sight to the blind, or power to the lame to walk.

2. They perfectly came up to the end of his ministry, as he was the Messiah; for it was his design to assure his Disciples of the immortality which he promised to them; and these cures, and these resurrections, which were wrought only by his word, were sufficient to convince them, as well of the sovereign power he had to execute his promises, as of his goodness, which was necessary to confirm the faith of his followers.

3. Some of his miracles were such as evinced his likeness to Moses: he changes water into wine at *Cana;* he feeds many thousands in the desert; he walks on the water, and makes one of his Disciples to walk with him; as Moses changed the waters to blood, and had caused manna to rain down upon the Israelites, and had opened the sea for their passage.

4. One ought to observe here, that if Jesus Christ's miracles were not like those of Moses, two only excepted, viz. his cursing of the barren fig-tree, and the drowning of the swine, this was to shew that he was not come, like Moses, to execute the judgments of God, but to exercise acts of grace and mercy; those

now mentioned being sufficient to evince it was not for want of power.

If the Samaritan woman argued very rationally when she said concerning Christ, *When the Messiah shall come, will he do greater signs than these?* we may with more reason urge it now, since we know not only that Jesus Christ hath wrought such great miracles, but also conferred upon his Disciples a power of doing greater miracles than himself ever did.

CHAP. XI.

That the Predictions of our Lord Jesus Christ clearly prove him to be the Messiah.

ONE might have observed, that John the Baptist foretold many things concerning the person of our Lord, and the glory of his ministry; that Simeon foretold that he was to be *a sign which should be spoken against:* and it is known how exactly these things were fulfilled.

But it will be more for our purpose to examine those prophecies which were pronounced by Christ himself.

I pretend not to repeat them all here, nor to shew by how many ways, and upon how many occasions, Jesus Christ did reiterate them: this would take up too much time. I shall only set down the chief of them, and add some few reflections.

When Jesus Christ calls the fishers to follow him, he foretels that he would make them teachers of the world; *I will make you*, saith he, *fishers of men.* He promises to make them famous by miracles, and to send them the gifts of his Holy Spirit, which the people of Israel had now for above 400 years been deprived of.

He promised to give them an authority over the consciences of men; so that what they should forbid us on earth, should be forbidden in heaven.

He foretels the calling of the Gentiles to his religion; *Many*, saith he, *shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven;* which is the more considerable, because he seemed himself unwilling to shew any favour to the Gentiles, whom he called Dogs, according to the language of the Jews.

He foretels the rejection of the Jews; *The children of the kingdom*, saith he, *shall be cast out into outer darkness.*

He foretels the persecutions which were to happen to his Disciples from the Jews as well as from the Roman govenors; *They shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings*, &c.

He foretels, that notwithstanding all these persecutions, yet his church should not only continue, assuring them that *the gates of hell should never prevail against her;* but also should greatly flourish and increase, according to what David had foretold Psalm lx. verse 3. alluding to the sudden fruitfulness which is caused by dew.

He above thirty times foretels his suffering and death.

He foretels his resurrection the third day.

He foretels that Judas should betray him, St. Peter deny him; that his Apostles should be scattered, as soon as they should see him smitten. He foretels the martyrdom of St. Peter, which he was to suffer for his sake; and to St. John, that he was to survive the destruction of *Jerusalem.* He foretels, that after his ascension to heaven, he should begin the call of all the nations of the earth; *When I shall be lifted up from the earth*, saith he, *I shall draw all men unto me.*

He often foretels the destruction of *Jerusalem* and the temple; *Behold*, saith he, *your house is left unto you desolate.*

He foretels that many false Messiahs should come after him, whom the Jews should receive, though they had rejected him as an impostor.

Several reflections may be made upon these predictions of our Lord. In short, one may observe at first, that there are three sorts of them in the New Testament: some of them were fulfilled soon after they were pronounced; as those concerning the ass which he sent his Disciples for, those of his death and resurrection, of St. Peter's denying him, and the flight of his Apostles, &c.

The design of these was to establish the belief of those which were further off; which is the method of God himself, the Father of our Lord, in the Old Testament, as I have observed.

Some of them related to matters which were more remote; as the wars, for instance, which Christ foretold, the destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the dispersion of the Jews.

Lastly, there were some whose accomplishment was at a very great distance, after many ages, some of them reaching to the end of the world.

One sees plainly that this mixture of our Saviour's predictions, which are of so very different sorts, is of use to confirm the belief, and ascertain the truth of them, the exact fulfilling the first oracle making way for the belief and expectation of the second, and so on, till all be fulfilled.

One may observe afterwards, that Jesus Christ and his Apostles, on whom he (according to his promise), after his ascension, poured forth the spirit of prophecy, did ordinarily follow the same notions and expressions which the Prophets of the Old Testament made use of.

Thus we find Jesus Christ makes use of Daniel's notions, where he speaks of the destruction of *Jeru-*

salem; thus we see that he imitates the most illustrious actions of the Prophets; and, to make his predictions the more observed, in accomplishing the prophecy of Zachariah on Palm-Sunday, in the midst of the acclamations of the people he weeps over *Jerusalem*, as if its destruction were already come. Thus Jesus Christ saith to St. Peter, *When thou shalt be old, another shall guide thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not;** thus foretelling his death: thus he instructs him in the calling of the Gentiles, under a representation of all sorts of beasts, commanding him also, even as to the impure animals, *Slay and eat.* All the Revelations are full of such prophetical ideas, taken from the Old Testament, from Genesis, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Zachariah, &c.

But here are other reflections of as great importance as the former.

The first is, That the greatest part of these predictions are nothing but a continuance and more distinct explication of the oracles of the Old Testament, concerning the sufferings of the Messiah, the calling of the Gentiles, the destruction of the commonwealth of the Jews; and besides, they are continued to the last day of the world, which is the end of prophecy.

The second is, That these predictions had not the least probability upon which they might rationally have been grounded. What likelihood was there that Jesus Christ should be crucified, he who raised the dead, who commanded the sea and winds, he whom they would have taken by force to make him their king? What likelihood was there, that the Apostles, a company of poor miserable Jews, should bring over the Gentiles to the religion of a man who was accursed by the synagogue of the Jews, and crucified like a slave by the authority of the Roman magistrate? What probability was there of the destruc-

* John xxi. 18.

tion of *Jerusalem*, whilst the Jews, accustomed to the Roman yoke, made it their business to avoid all manner of occasions that might stir up the indignation of their masters against them? *It is expedient*, say they, *rather that one man perish* (meaning Jesus) *than to hazard the welfare of the whole nation.*

The third is, That these oracles were written by the Apostles, not only amongst discourses of another nature, but also linked together in such a chain, that their connection will not permit us to believe that they were contrived after the matters which they relate to were past; and also that they are constantly related by three Evangelists, long time before the things came to pass, St. John being the only witness of the destruction of *Jerusalem.*

The fourth is, That these oracles gave the Apostles as much grounds to expect calamities and violent deaths, as to Jesus Christ himself; so that there is no pretence of doubting that they were not faithfully recorded by the Evangelists; and that therefore, seeing the accomplishment has exactly answered to the oracle, we ought to look upon them as Divine oracles.

I confess that these oracles, no more than the books of the New Testament, were ever committed to the public custody of the Jews, as formerly the oracles of the Prophets of old were, but this cannot really diminish their authority.

I will not observe at present, that because the temple was to be burnt, it was not proper to depose them there; and it was for this reason God thought fit to cause the oracles of the Old Testament to be translated long before.

Nor yet, that it was very proper that these predictions, as well as the books of the New Testament, should be put into the hands of the Gentiles, who thenceforward were to be the people of God, and his temple.

But this I observe, that nothing can be imagined more solemn than these prophecies of our Saviour and his Disciples, as well as never any thing was more exactly fulfilled.

Jesus Christ was born at *Bethlehem*, according to the oracles. Now, as no man is master of the place of his birth, so it is plain that here is no room left for imposture: neither is a man any more the master of his death; wherefore, to give a certain character to his prophecy, he foretels his dying at *Jerusalem;* which accordingly was accomplished in all its circumstances. Can any thing be more exact?

But one may say, that it was easy for the Disciples to forge predictions suitable to the event, in like manner as Virgil hath done, in the sixth of his Æneids, of Marcellus. One may indeed contrive an imposture which shall be possible, and which may answer to some few oracles; but I shall here after shew the folly of that thought, when I came to prove the falthfulness of the Apostles and Evangelists.

But can we conceive such a suspicion concerning the conversion of the Gentiles, the ruin of Paganism, the victory of Christianity after ten persecutions? It is now above 1600 years that the Christian Religion subsists: whereas, who could have assured the Disciples of Jesus Christ, that their doctrine would have had so much as one or two followers after their death? The greatest empires, that of the Chaldeans, of the Persians, of the Grecians, and that of the Romans, have been overturned; and none of them singly have been of so long continuance as the kingdom of Jesus Christ, which nevertheless was attacked by all that was great and powerful in the world. Who sees not that this is the empire whereof Daniel speaks in the seventh of his Revelations, *which was never to have end.*

Jesus Christ foretold, as it is set down by his Disciples, according to the prophecy of Daniel, that the temple of *Jerusalem* should be destroyed, and

never built again: who could tell the Apostles, if they had forged this oracle themselves, that the endeavours of Julian to confound this prophecy, when he began to rebuild the temple, would be in vain, as indeed they proved by an effect of the Divine vengeance against the Jews, who were engaged in the rebuilding of it, under the authority of that emperor?*

Indeed, if one reflects on the oracles of Jesus Christ, one shall find them a thousand times more known than those of the Jews.

1. The greatest part of them were penned at one and the same time.

2. They were writ by several authors, who lived in different places.

3. They were read over the whole earth every Lord's day: they have been explained and commented upon soon after, every one endeavouring to take notice of their accomplishment.

4. They have been alleged in disputes against Jews and Gentiles, and have served for a foundation to the faith of the Christian church, whose teachers have made it their business to shew their uniformity with the oracles of the Old Testament, which are in the hands of the Jews, though the Jews have always considered the Christians as their most mortal enemies.

But one may also find that these oracles being for the most part much more clear and express, their accomplishment also hath been so much the more easily discernible; from whence it evidently follows, that Jesus Christ ought to be acknowledged *as the Prophet that was like unto Moses*, as is mentioned in the eighteenth of Deuteronomy, that is indeed the *true Messiah*.

* Ammian. Marcellin. lib. 23.

CHAP. XII.

That Jesus Christ died precisely in the same Manner as it was foretold that the Messiah should die.

I HAVE shewed, in my third part, that God had given to his church several oracles to explain distinctly this great truth concerning the Messiah.

1. He had set this up for a rule by Moses, *Cursed is he that hangeth on a tree.*

2. He had proposed by David the idea of the Messiah, as having his hands and feet pierced; the Gentiles and Jews uniting themselves against him.

3. He had foretold by Isaiah, that the Messiah was to be accounted a malefactor, and put to death.

4. He had repeated the same ideas by the Prophet Zechariah, who describes the manner of his being pierced, which has a natural reference to the notion of crucifixion.

I have also set down the reasons for which God separated the several parts of those prophetical descriptions of so surprising an event: the difficulty there was on the one hand to make these ideas to be received, which seem full of contradictions, the Messiah having been at first set forth as the Fountain of Blessing; and, on the other hand, their seeming incompatibility with the glory which God had promised to the Messiah, and by him to the Israelites.

And at last, I have shewed that these oracles do exactly and clearly describe the things which were to happen to the Messiah, which was to be so, because of the nature of these events, which were so strange, and at such a distance from the common ideas which men have, for the most part, of such things.

Our business therefore only is to consider at present, whether indeed Jesus Christ died in the same

manner as the Prophets had foretold that the Messiah should.

This character is a very illustrious one, to confirm that Jesus Christ is the Messiah; for it is well known that a prisoner is no longer master of the things that happen to him, neither of the kind of his death, nor of the manner of his burial.

In short, nothing can be imagined more foolish than to suppose that the Disciples of Jesus Christ should apply to their master, that he might pass for the Messiah, such oracles as had not usually been applied to the Messiah by the Jews, amongst whom they lived, and whom they endeavoured to dispose for the receiving of Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah.

Now we cannot conceive any thing more exact than the agreement which we find between the prophecies and the event.

1. When Jesus Christ, by his triumphant entry into *Jerusalem*, riding on an ass, had put his Disciples in mind of one passage in Zachary, he obliged them also to cast their eyes upon another, when he foretold his death, and their flight, as the accomplishment of this oracle; *I will smite the shepherd, and the flock shall be scattered*, Zach. xiii. 7.*

2. He was beset with a band of Roman soldiers, and the servants of the principal men amongst the Jews, who apprehended him, under the conduct of Judas: which exactly answers, first, to the description which we find Psalm xxii. *Dogs*, that is Heathens, whom the Jews treated as such, *and strong Bulls*, that is Jews, represented by clean beasts, *have beset me round;* and secondly, to that other prophecy, *He that eats bread with me hath lift up his heel against me.*

3. He offers himself freely to death, according to that of Isaiah, that he *gave his soul an offering for*

* Matt. xxvi. 31.

sin. This appears, not only by his going into the garden, where he knew that he should be taken, but also by his telling the soldiers that he was the man they looked for. He opposed St. Peter's attempts towards his rescue, and declares that he did not fly from death, but was willing to satisfy the intent of the prophecies.

4. He is forsaken by his Disciples, as he himself had testified of it as foretold by the Prophets, Zach. xiii. 7.

5. He is struck on the face before Annas, as Jeremiah had foretold, Lament. iii. 30. *He giveth his cheek to him that smiteth him.*

6. He appears before Caiaphas, surrounded by every thing that was great amongst the Jews, whether lawyers or churchmen, according to Psalm ii.

7. He is silent before his unjust judges, and neglects to answer the accusations which the false witnesses deposed against him, according to the prophecy of Isaiah, *As a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth*, Isaiah liii. 7. and the description which David gives of him, Psalm xxxi. and xxxix.

8. They opened their mouths against him in accusing him of blasphemy, as David had figuratively expressed it, Psalm xxii. 13.

9. They spit in his face, they buffeted and abused him the whole night, according to that oracle of Isaiah, xlix. 6.

10. When Judas saw that Jesus Christ was delivered to Pilate by the Jews, who demanded his crucifixion, he returned the thirty pieces of silver, wherewith they purchased the Potters' field, afterwards called the Field of Blood, and set apart by the Jews for the burial of strangers, as was foretold by Zechariah xi. 12. and by Jeremiah, xxxii. 25.

11. He is accused before Pilate, and brought before Herod, without justifying himself of the crimes

laid to his charge, as it is Psalm xxxviii. and xxvii. 12.

12. Pilate and Herod agree in conspiring the death of Jesus Christ, according to the description of Psalm ii.

13. Pilate desiring to save Jesus, the Jews demand Barabbas might be released, and Jesus punished, as David had foretold, Psalm xxii. 14.

14. Jesus Christ was scourged by Pilate's order, which was foretold, Psalm xxxviii. and lxix. Isaiah liii. ver. 5, and chap. lxiii.

15. He is brought forth by Pilate to the people with an *Ecce Homo, Behold the Man,* which was foretold by Isaiah: *When we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him; he is despised and rejected of men: we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.*

16. He is afterwards delivered to the soldiers, who, before they crucified him, insulted over him with a thousand indignities, and scourged him again, according to the prophecies so often before alleged.

17. They crucify him with two robbers, which answers to that prophecy, Isaiah liii. 12. *He was numbered with transgressors.*

18. They give him gall and vinegar to drink, as was foretold Psalm lxix.

19. They pierce his hands and feet in nailing him to the cross, which answers to Psalm xxii. 17, 18.

20. They part his garments, which is represented in the same Psalm, verse 19. and cast lots on his vesture, according to the same Psalm, in the very same place.

21. He suffers a thousand reproaches upon the cross, according to what we find Psalm xxii. verse 8. and Psalm lxix. verse 8, 10.

22. And in particular, the Jews and Scribes reproach him in the very words of Psalm xxii. verse 8.

23. Jesus Christ cries out, applying to himself the beginning of Psalm xxii. *My God! My God!*

Why hast thou forsaken me? as he had before applied to himself the prophecy concerning the Messiah in the third of Daniel.

24. He commends his soul into the hands of God in the very words which we read Psalm xvi.

These are the principal circumstances of the death of Jesus Christ, which one sees to be exactly agreeable to the prophecies going before concerning them: let us now consider those which followed his death, which we shall not find to be less particular.

1. The bones of Jesus Christ were not broken, as those of the two thieves; which one may see foretold, Psalm xxxiv. verse 21.

2. They opened his side with a spear, according to the idea of Zechariah, chap. x. verse 12. *They shall look upon him whom they have pierced.*

3. His body is buried by Joseph of *Arimathea*, in a new sepulchre; which answers to the prophecy of Isaiah, chap. liii.

These remarks do, in my judgment, clearly prove that in the death of Christ all the characters by which the Prophets have distinguished the death of the Messiah, are actually found.

But, that we may yet be more sensible how justly these oracles are applied to Jesus Christ, here are some reflections upon the application which the Apostles make of these particular facts which happened to Christ, to those oracles which I have now mentioned.

The first is, That the relation of these facts is joined with an account of the weakness whereinto they all fell: they relate their own flight, and forsaking their master, with St. Peter's denying of him; whilst they set down the courage of those women, and that entire love which they shewed to the person of Jesus.

The second is, That the account of the accomplishment of these ancient oracles is interwoven with the accomplishment of those which were uttered by

Jesus Christ, which alone are sufficient to make good his claim.

The third is, That our Saviour did never on any occasion more openly stand to his pretension of being the Messiah, than when he applied to himself those oracles which by their public consent were referred to the Messiah, which the Jews at that time more obstinately contested than ever.

The fourth is, That there never was a more exact description of all circumstances which might assure us of the truth of any relation, than that which the Evangelists have given us of the death of Jesus Christ, in which we find the places, the time, the persons, their discourses, and other things of that nature, set down with extreme care.

The fifth is, That as this fact, with all its circumstances, is the most exactly described of any thing that ever was, so it was a matter concerning which it was scarce possible to impose upon any one. All was done in the face of the whole nation, who were met together at their most solemn festival: all was done in the presence of the sovereign Heathen magistrate, of the council of the Jews, of Herod, and of those who followed him to *Jerusalem*.

The sixth is, That we find an account of some miracles interwoven with this relation of the Evangelists concerning the death of Christ; and those miracles as public, and as little subject to suspicion, as the death itself of Jesus Christ, if we take the pains to examine them.

They who come to take Jesus, fall down backward to the ground; Jesus Christ restores the ear of the high priest's servant, which was cut off: there was darkness over all the land, from nine o'clock in the morning till noon; the vail of the temple is rent. These are miraculous actions, and such as the Jews might easily have refuted, wheresoever they had been proposed, if the truth of them had not been beyond all question.

From all these remarks it evidently follows, That it is impossible to dispute the application which the Apostles make of these oracles, which are so particular, to the person of Jesus Christ, as the true Messiah: we find every part of their relation exactly answering to the prophecies. How then can any one doubt of their being fulfilled in him? especially seeing it is evident, by so many other proofs, that he was indeed the Messiah, and that God has been pleased so many other ways to confirm the same truth.

CHAP. XIII.

That Jesus Christ was raised again the third Day, according to the Prophets, and afterwards ascended into Heaven.

HAVING shewed, in the foregoing Chapter, that Jesus Christ was crucified under Pontius Pilate, for maintaining that he was the promised Messiah; I am now to shew, that, according to the prophecies set down in my third part, he rose again the third day, and afterwards ascended into heaven. As these two facts are the most important of all that are contained in the Gospel; because, if they be denied, all the Divine worship given to Jesus Christ, by the Apostles, and a great number of Jews and Gentiles, who received him for their master in matters of religion, is absolutely unlawful; so we ought solidly to prove, that they are indisputably true. Of which we shall be fully convinced, by making some observations upon the relation which the Evangelists give us concerning them; and we shall easily find therein all the characters of truth.

There is no necessity of observing, that a resurrection from the dead is a fact which can hardly be believed; and that, though the Jews did not all of them

look upon it is an impossible thing, yet there were Sadducees among them, whose doctrine was publicly taught. It is certain that though the Disciples had seen Jesus Christ raising three persons from the dead, and amongst others Lazarus, a little before his death, yet we find that they were not thereby more disposed to believe that Christ was to rise from the dead.

In short, though the Evangelists tell us, that Jesus Christ himself had foretold that he was to rise again the third day, which was a thing so commonly known, that the priests, to elude the prophecy, desired of Pilate, that a guard might be set on Jesus's grave; yet they expressly tell us, that the Disciples, none excepted, were in such a consternation at the death of Jesus Christ, that they had entirely lost the hopes of seeing the accomplishment of that prophecy. Some pious women, who had accompanied him to the cross, and were desirous to shew some marks of their veneration after his death, came indeed to his sepulchre, but with spices to embalm his dead body; so far were they from expecting to find him risen from the dead. Though these holy women were convinced of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, by the apparition of an angel, by the discourse of our Saviour himself, and by the repetition of his order, that they should go to *Galilee*, where they should see him, yet the relation which they give of these things is accounted fabulous; so that two only of all the Apostles had the curiosity to go to the grave, and inform themselves. Here is a great unbelief amongst the Apostles, which was to be cured: this was a condition wholly inconsistent, if we suppose them impostors, and that they intended to impose upon the world.

A second thing we may observe is, That as the incredulity of our Saviour's own Disciples was extraordinary, so we cannot imagine any more efficacious means than were employed to overcome this their doubtfulness. If one joins the relations of the Evangelists together, one may find several degrees of

evidence in those proofs which confirm the truth of the resurrection of our Saviour.

The first is, the manner of their being informed of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Angels at first declare his resurrection to some women; Jesus Christ afterwards appears to Mary Magdalen, all alone; afterwards he appears only to two of his Disciples, then to St. Peter; afterwards he appears to seven of them at once; then, to all his Disciples, except Thomas; and soon after, to the eleven, *Thomas being one of them.* After all this, he appears to a greater number of his followers; till at last, having been several times seen of them all, he appears to them all assembled together, and is taken up into heaven in their sight. It is evident, that as they were informed of this truth one after another, so they were more obliged to examine the fact more attentively when Jesus Christ appeared to them.

The second degree has relation to those marks and characters by which they were assured that it was Jesus Christ himself. The Angels repeat to the women the command which Jesus Christ, before his death, had given to his Disciples, to go into *Galilee;* Jesus Christ, appearing to Mary Magdalen, repeats the same to her, and gives her a particular commission for St. Peter, to comfort him in his affliction, for having denied his master. Appearing to his Disciples, as they went to *Emmaus*, he refers them to the prophecies which spoke of his death and resurrection; and moreover, when he broke bread with them, they hear the same prayers which he ordinarily used at the blessing of it. He appears to them the same day the fifth time, and shews them his feet and his hands; he repeats the grant of the authority which the Father had given him; he breathes upon them, saying, *Receive the Holy Ghost;* a week after, he lets Thomas touch him; he appears afterwards to seven of his Apostles upon the lake of *Tiberias*, where he confirms St. Peter in his charge, from which his denying of

Christ might seem to have excluded him, after he had wrought a miracle in the draught of the fishes, which was like some miracles which he had wrought before his death. Afterwards, he appears upon the same mountain in *Galilee*, where, in all probability, he had been transfigured before, and is there seen of five hundred of his Disciples at once. And last of all, he appears to them at *Jerusalem*, after their return from *Galilee;* and from thence goes with them to *Bethany*, where, after he had told them of the absolute power which God had given them, he commands them to go and baptize in his name, he foretels the miracles which they should work, and the gifts which they should receive at *Jerusalem*. All these so very different circumstances were only designed to assure their eyes, their hands, their minds, their consciences, that was the same Jesus whom they had always followed.

It is worth our taking notice of the diversity of these circumstances, for the certainty of this fact, which absolutely prevent all pretences of doubtfulness. Jesus Christ appears ten several times after his death: he appears five times on the very day of his resurrection; he appears at several hours, to different persons, in several places, but always to persons to whom he was familiarly known, to those who were not at all credulous. The first news they had of his resurrection seemed only to raise their scruples, if the testimony of their senses, which saw him and touched him, had not removed all suspicions. Jesus Christ appears to them in places where he had wrought many miracles, and where he had often before conversed with them.

But one may make another more important reflection, upon the time and the day wherein our Saviour rose again. Of the ten several times in which he appeared to his Disciples, he appeared five times on the day of his resurrection; he appeared to them eight days after; and after that, the eighth day, which he

signalised by his frequent appearing to his Disciples, was consecrated to celebrate the memory of this event every week: one finds certain tokens hereof in the writings of the Apostles; and it is known that all Christians after them did inviolably observe this law. Now, let any one consider, whether it would have been possible to introduce this custom in the time of the Apostles, if the resurrection of Christ had not been a fact confessed on all hands. Can any one conceive, that the Apostles and their Disciples, who were witnesses of the death of Jesus Christ, and who celebrated the memory thereof by a sacrament, could have been so stupid as to establish a custom which would put people upon examining the fact, and have convinced them in a little time, since none of those that followed them would have submitted to this practice, if they had not been convinced by their eyes, and their other senses, and by a thousand other proofs, of the truth of so capital a fact, which was so much disputed by the Jews, of which they were obliged to make a solemn commemoration two and fifty times every year, as long as they lived?

Let us add to this remark, which we have elsewhere urged, with reference to the creation, another reflection upon a fact which the Evangelists tell us: they tell us, that though the resurrection of Christ was accompanied with very peculiar circumstances, sufficient to convince both Jews and Gentiles of the truth of it, being ushered in with an earthquake, with apparitions of angels to the soldiers that guarded the sepulchre of Jesus, and were frightened thereby, yet the council of the Jews contrived, with the soldiers, a most impudent lie to outface it; and accordingly the soldiers, coming before Pilate, tell him that the Disciples had stolen away the body of Jesus whilst they slept; and his Disciples tell us, that, since, this hath been the common opinion of the Jews.

I will not so much as take notice here of the palpable falsity of this deposition; for, if the soldiers

were asleep, how could they depose concerning a fact which was done at that time? if they were not asleep, why did not they hinder the Disciples from taking the body of their master away? How could they affirm that thieves had taken him away, when the linen clothes wherein his body was shrouded being left in the grave, and the napkin that was about his head being folded up in a place by itself, do absolutely evince that he was not taken away by persons that were in fear of a surprise? What probability is there, in short, to suspect that his Disciples, who forsook Jesus Christ whilst he was yet alive, who fled from him at that time, should undertake such a hazardous attempt, to have his body only?

Neither will I insist upon a representation of the Apostle's sincerity, which made them give us in their histories a plain account of the report which was spread against the belief of the resurrection of Jesus, before ever that the Disciples had attested the same.

But I observe another very particular character in their relation, which is, that it was impossible for them to establish this fact of the resurrection, without accusing thereby the whole council of the Jews, of the most shameful and crying imposture that ever was: to write a thing of this nature against the heads of that religion, was to sacrifice themselves to the hatred of the public, and to expose themselves to inevitable ruin. In short, let us imagine whether, after a charge of this nature, it was easy for the Apostles to publish their books, and preach publicly that Jesus Christ was risen from the dead? And yet this was what they did with a surprising diligence, when they inserted this terrible accusation into their books and sermons; which alone is sufficient to demonstrate that they were infinitely convinced of the resurrection, and also in a condition to convince all gainsayers, as we shall shew hereafter.

One may add to this proof the conversion of St Paul, and the care which he afterwards took to confirm the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He was a declared enemy of Jesus Christ, and of the Christian religion; and yet, soon after the death of Christ, he preaches him up for the Messiah. How came this sudden change? He asserts that he had seen in heaven this Jesus who was risen from the dead, and received from him the Apostleship; accordingly we find him preaching by these orders, without any communication had with the first Disciples of Jesus Christ. He relates these matters in a manner so little affected to advance his ministry in the minds of the Galatians, who preferred St. Peter and the other Apostles before him, that there is no ground left to doubt of them.

One ought to make a like reflection upon the conversion of Cornelius the centurion: he was a proselyte, that is, a Gentile by birth, but a Jew by profession; and by the employment he was in, he had occasion of being more particularly informed of the deposition of the soldiers, who probably were not unknown to him, for he was in the garrison at *Cæsarea*, which was not far from *Jerusalem*. Yet, however, this Cornelius, after he had a vision which commanded him to send to *Joppa*, a place made famous, because Jonah the Prophet set sail from thence, who was a type of the Messiah in his death and resurrection; this Cornelius, I say, embraced the Christian religion, becomes the first bishop of *Cæsarea*, and died a martyr for the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The great affection which St. Luke had for St. Paul, confirms the same truth. St. Luke had never seen our Saviour; he was born at *Antioch*, where in all probability he exercised his profession of physic; yet he was converted to Christianity, and followed St. Paul in all places, and writ the history of his miracles and preaching. Who doubts but that the

reason hereof was, because he had seen the dead whom Christ had raised to life, and had seen St. Paul, whom Jesus Christ had dignified with the Apostleship, raise others also from the dead?

It is certain that those who were first convinced by the relation of the Apostles, must needs have had very evident proofs of the truth of it.

The Jews had Sadducees amongst them, who denied the possibility of the resurrection in general: the council of the Jews especially had made it their business to decry the conduct, the doctrine, and the miracles of Jesus Christ, and in particular to make the belief of his resurrection suspected; and so much the more, because Jesus Christ had foretold it, and his Apostles maintained that it was come to pass accordingly. If, in opposition to these strong prejudices, there had only been the deposition of two or three persons to confirm this fact, there would have been reason to doubt of it; but we find that this thing, which of itself seems hard to be believed, and was otherwise so much contested, is, 1. Proved by ten several apparitions; 2. It is attested by above five hundred Disciples; 3. It was publicly preached by the Disciples of Christ at *Jerusalem* itself, and throughout all *Judea*, where it was most of all disputed; 4. It was received by the very enemies of Jesus Christ, as St. Paul and Cornelius, and by thousands of those who, having demanded his death, were converted by the preaching of the Apostles; 5. It was confirmed by the martyrdom of the greatest part of them; and 6. It was not only authorised by the presence of the three persons whom Christ had raised to life, and who lived, one of them at *Bethany*, fifteen furlongs from *Jerusalem*, where Jesus ascended to heaven, another at *Naim*, &c. but it was further verified by several resurrections wrought by the Apostles, to whom Christ had vouchsafed that astonishing power.

It was also a very considerable thing, that the commonwealth of the Jews continued near forty years after the time that the Apostles undertook openly to preach up the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the capital article of their religion; and yet in all that time it was never opposed by any public writing either of the Jews or Gentiles. If the Jews, in their unjust intrigues against Jesus Christ and his religion, endeavoured to abuse the world, in this matter, with calumniating stories, neither have the Apostles been wanting to accuse the principal men of their nation of imposture; and they have despised the most cruel of their punishments, to maintain the justice of their charge; and yet none of them would undertake to justify the calumnies of their council, though they saw Christianity spreading itself not only over all *Judea*, but in all parts of the world. To speak of it as it is, this conduct of theirs was a manifest betraying of their cause, or rather an open acknowledgment that what they had published against the innocency of the Disciples, and the truth of the resurrection of Jesus, was without all ground.

I foresee only one probable difficulty which can be opposed to the solidity of these reflections. A Jew may demand, why Jesus Christ after his resurrection did not converse as openly amongst the Jews as before, that so he might have been known by those who had crucified him, which would have put the truth of the resurrection out of doubt?

But, to speak truth, this objection is not reasonable: for, 1. Jesus Christ had threatened the unbelieving Jews, that they should see him no more; and he ought to make good his threatening. 2. Who sees not that they would have looked upon his appearing amongst them as a fantastic apparition, after they had seen him work so many miracles, and had attributed them to the devil? 3. I say, that such an apparition was not agreeable to our Saviour's doctrine in the parable of the rich man: *They have Mo*

*ses and the Prophets; if they hear not them, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.** 4. Jesus Christ having for the most part conversed in *Galilee*, at *Nazareth*, and *Capernaum*, it was to the Galileans and his Disciples that he was chiefly to shew himself, to be acknowledged by them, as being the persons who were particularly to bear witness of this truth. After so strong a presumption as the governors of that people had of Christ's resurrection, founded upon the earthquake which accompanied it, and upon the deposition of the soldiers to whom the Angels had appeared, had not they all the reason in the world to believe the testimony of the Apostles concerning this truth, which they heard several times attested by them in full council, and saw confirmed by miraculous cures which they could not question in the least?

Lastly, Is not this objection the most ridiculous thing in the world? For, let us suppose that these considerations are not strong enough to justify our Saviour's conduct when he gave these proofs of his resurrection, doth it follow, because he did not make choice of means (in order to persuade the Jews) which they preferred before others used by him, without any solid reason, that therefore we must reject the deposition of so many witnesses who unanimously attest it? Since Jesus Christ had raised three persons to life again, which then lived in *Judea;* since *Jerusalem* had continued forty years after the death of Christ; since sixty solemn feasts were celebrated in that time, where all the Jews had an occasion to examine the truth of these facts, and the truth or falsity of the accusation charged upon the Apostles by the council of the Jews; and that multitudes of Jews and Gentiles were converted at the preaching of the Apostles, who reduced all to this question of the fact of the resurrection of our Sa-

* Luke xvi. 29. 31.

viour; is not this an invincible proof against all the accusations and suspicions of the Synagogue?

Forasmuch as the witnesses who maintain the resurrection of Christ, are the very same that attest his ascension into heaven, and that they assert it with the same proofs, and the same zeal, the reflections here set down may serve for that also; and the rather, because I am next to consider the sending of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which is an undeniable proof, both of the resurrection of Christ and his ascension; and that these very gifts of the Holy Spirit enabled the Jews to write, preach, and publish throughout all the world, the truths of that Christianity which we now profess.

CHAP. XIV.

That Jesus Christ sent to his Apostles, and to the Primitive Christians, the miraculous Gifts of his Holy Spirit, as he had promised in the Ancient Prophecies.

I HAVE shewn that the prophecies of the Old Testament speak very plainly of this sending of the Spirit, as a preliminary to the calling of the Gentiles, which was the great design of God. The Prophet Joel speaks of it as such, and makes this wonder to precede the destruction of *Jerusalem*, as St. Peter observes in the second of the Acts. Isaiah speaks very particularly of it as such, in the eleventh chapter of his prophecy, where he sufficiently intimates that the spirit of prophecy should from thenceforward so rest upon Jesus Christ, that it would not be found any longer among the Jews, whose city and temple should be destroyed,

At present my business is to shew that this thing has been exactly fulfilled, according to the design

which God had laid down in the Prophets. To be convinced of this, we need only make some reflections upon the relation which St. Luke gives us of it in the Acts.

He tells us therefore, that fifty days only after the death of Jesus Christ, the Apostles having continued at *Jerusalem*, and being assembled there, they received the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, that is, the power of speaking all sorts of languages, to make them fit to preach the Gospel to all nations, and to explain the most sublime mysteries of our Saviour's religion.

Every thing is considerable in this relation of St. Luke: 1. That he relates this fact as happening fifty days only after the Jewish passover, when Christ was crucified; the whole nation of the Jews having been witnesses of his death. 2. That he relates it as happening in the same city where Jesus Christ was condemned, that the same multitude who after fifty days were again assembled there at this feast, might be witnesses of this miraculous event. In short, it plainly appears that this new law from mount *Sion*, was solemnly promulged in the presence of all the Jews, who were assembled from all parts of the world; as the old law was, when all the people assisted at the foot of mount *Sinai*. 3. That these gifts were granted to all the Disciples of our Saviour: gifts which till that time had been wholly unheard of, and whereof some part only had been granted for some Prophets, and to some Priests, and of which none had been made partakers since the time of Malachi; God having so ordered it, that the desires of the Jews might be the more inflamed for the Messiah's coming, as also that upon his coming he might the more easily be discerned. 4. That this was a fact openly known amongst the Jews, and differently interpreted by them; some saying, *They were full of new wine*. 5. That the Apostles as-

serted, by the mouth of St. Peter, that this was an accomplishment of the ancient oracles, as well as of the promises of Jesus Christ. 6. That they declared that the resurrection of Jesus Christ, his ascension into heaven, and this miraculous donative, had been foretold by David and Joel. It is certainly therefore very natural to make these following reflections upon the relation of so considerable an event.

The first will confirm the truth of this miraculous fact, if we consider that it is absurd to suppose that St. Luke, a wise man, should be so rash as to relate a matter of this nature, if he had not been fully convinced of it, and if it had not been an easy thing to have convinced his readers thereof also; nothing more being required for their conviction, but the presence of one of those first Christians, and to make a trial of this supernatural virtue bestowed on them, for which there were frequent occasions.

2. We must observe that this relation of St. Luke is, as it were, the foundation which he lays down, to make his book of the Acts to appear just and reasonable, and to justify the Apostles' conduct in preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, not only contrary to the opinion of the Jews, who looked upon them as wholly excluded from the privileges of the covenant; but also contrary to the seeming maxim of Jesus Christ, who acted only as the minister of circumcision; and contrary to the pretensions of many Christians, who, after the mission of the Holy Ghost, took it very ill that St. Peter had preached to the Gentiles.

3. St. Luke supposes that this fact came to pass in such a manner, that it was followed by consequences as illustrious as they were incredible. Twelve poor fishermen undertook to go and preach to all the world, that their Master, who fifty days before was crucified at *Jerusalem*, at the prosecution of the

whole synagogue, and by order of one of the magistrates of the Roman empire, was not only living, not only ascended into heaven, but that he also had given them the power of speaking all sorts of languages, of curing all diseases, and even of raising the dead.

4. They go yet further; they boldly maintain that Jesus Christ had given them a privilege of communicating the same power to all those who would believe that he was the promised Messiah; and this, without any other mystery but the bare laying-on of their hands, after they had received them by baptism into the profession of Christianity.

Nothing could have been more easy than to convince them of the contrary, unless they had confirmed the truth of their assertion by the miraculous consequences of that first miracle. The fact was publicly acknowledged: Simon Magus is convinced thereof; and he who had made himself famous by his sorceries, becomes a disciple. St. Luke, in a history of the actions of thirty years, relates the continual miracles wrought by the Apostles, and particularly by St. Paul, whom he constantly followed.

It seems to me, that if one considers the history itself, and the person who made it, it will appear to be a true and faithful relation; however, there are other testimonies which invincibly establish the same truth.

1. The Gospel was, in effect, established in most of the provinces and great cities of the Roman empire. St. Paul writes to the Christians of *Thessalonica*, *Corinth*, and *Ephesus*, to the Galatians, Colossians, &c. which is an evident argument that there were Christians every where, that is, disciples of these twelve fishermen, who understood nothing but their native Syriac language. How then were all these nations converted, without supposing the truth of the miracle at the Pentecost?

2. The Apostles speak to them of these miraculous gifts as of a common thing; St. Paul employing

some part of his first epistle to the Corinthians, to regulate those disorders which arose in the church, by reason of the abuse of those gifts. St. James speaks of the power that the priests had to cure the sick; and St. Paul wishes for an opportunity of going to *Rome*, to communicate those gifts to the Romans.

3. They take occasion to raise the dignity of the gospel above the law, in calling it the ministry of the Spirit, in opposition to the letter of the law, notwithstanding the tables of the law had been given to Moses in so very illustrious a manner.

It is of great moment here to consider three things, which alone are sufficient to confirm the truth of the Christian religion.

The first is, That this mission of the Spirit is alone sufficient to convince mankind of the Divinity of Jesus Christ. God gave to Adam a power of speaking one language; and afterwards he divided the same, to make a confusion among the builders of *Babel:* and Jesus Christ doth the same thing, to confirm the glory and belief of his Divinity. God vouchsafes the power of miracles to some, Jesus Christ communicates it to a far greater number; miracles not having been so generally wrought, because no people ever had that power in all the foregoing ages. The Father wrought so few miracles, that he might leave to the Son this means of making himself known. The Son had the glory of pouring forth the Holy Ghost in a greater abundance than the Father, thereby to supply the shame of his humiliation. This is the true reason why the Scripture saith, That *the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus Christ was not yet glorified.*

The second is, That from this miracle one ought to infer these two conclusions: the first is, That God was fully pacified by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Apostles constantly representing the passion of

our Saviour as a sacrifice offered by him; the other is, That from that time forward mankind was consecrated to God at his temple. Jesus Christ, in his prayer before his death, expresses himself much in the same manner as Solomon did at his dedication of the first temple, and fire from heaven falls down on his sacrifice: Jesus Christ consecrates his Apostles to be the living stones of his temple, and causes the heavenly flames to fall down upon them, as had formerly been granted at Solomon's dedication of the first temple.

The third is, That the Jews themselves cannot conceive a more glorious or magnificent accomplishment of the ancient oracles concerning the effusion of the Holy Spirit at the time of the Messiah, than what we find related by St. Luke; whereof the whole world may see the visible effects, in the calling of the Gentiles to the Christian religion: from whence one may rationally conclude, That Jesus Christ must be acknowledged for the Messiah whom God had promised.

CHAP. XV.

That according to the Prophecies, the Apostles of Jesus Christ have called the Gentiles to the Profession of the Christian Religion.

WE have already seen what was the design of God, and that the distinction which he made of the Jews from other nations, was only that the Messiah might by that means be the more certainly known, in whom all mankind had a right, as being promised to Adam.

God renewed the idea of this truth in a very lively manner, when he assured Abraham, before he gave him the law of circumcision, *That in his seed*

all nations should be blessed. Jacob, enlightened by the spirit of prophecy on his death-bed, plainly takes this truth for granted, when he says that the Messiah, whom he calls Shiloh, was to be the expectation of the Gentiles, Gen. xlix. Why doth he not say, that he was to be the expectation of the Jews, but because he supposeth that they were to be rejected, and the Gentiles called in their stead?

One sees in the Psalms, and in the Prophets until Malachi inclusively, a thousand declarations of this future calling of the Gentiles to the faith of the Messiah; and though the most part of the ideas which the Prophets make use of, seems to be very figurative, describing the Messiah as a conqueror, who was to subdue the whole world to his dominion by the force of arms; yet we find a great many others interwoven with them, which only relate to the profession of the religion of the Messiah, and which, not being capable of any other sense, sufficiently determine the others, so as not to perplex the reader with those seeming obscurities. But Jesus Christ very distinctly declares this in divers places, and above all in the xxivth of St. Matthew; *This Gospel,* saith he, *shall be preached throughout all the world.*

Now, nothing could ever be more exactly fulfilled than these ancient oracles have been. Let the Jews cavil as long as they please about our application of many of the prophecies of the Old Testament to our Saviour; let them put a sense upon the Scriptures, which treat of this subject, contrary to what the Jews, who were contemporary with Jesus Christ, ever did, and to the most of those with whom the first Christians, as Justin, Tertullian, and others, from time to time disputed; yet at least they cannot deny, but that the thing has been exactly fulfilled.

It is clearer than the day, that nothing could be more exact. All Christians, from one end of the world to another, worshipped the God of Israel,

according to the prophecy of Malachi: Jesus Christ subjected them to the moral part of the law of Moses. The Mahometans themselves have learnt of the Christians to acknowledge no other God but the God of Israel. The multitude of false gods which the world worshipped, are vanished from all places where Christianity has been planted; and very few are left in comparison of those which are already destroyed; so that we must consider the thing as already gone very far. In truth, while things continue thus, one may reasonably maintain against the Jews, that our Jesus and his disciples have taken away all the glory which could be reserved for that Messiah whom they expect. They must, if they be jealous for the glory of him whom they look for, endeavour to make the world forsake the worship of the God of Israel, to make way for the accomplishment of those oracles which can have no place in that state wherein the world is at present.

But though this reflection upon the exact accomplishment of the oracles concerning the calling of the Gentiles to the religion of the Messiah may suffice, yet I think myself bound to make some further observations upon this subject. In short, every thing deserves to be considered in this calling of the Gentiles to the knowledge of the Gospel.

I do not take notice at present that the person first employed in calling of the Gentiles, is St. Peter, to whom Jesus Christ had promised the honour of founding his church amongst the nations, and who himself at first thought that the thing was unlawful, and who, after a vision given him for that very purpose, observes the Jewish customs, and obliges the Gentiles to do the same; neither do I observe that the first who was called was Cornelius, a Roman officer, who resided at *Cæsarea*, where he became a proselyte. Behold here a man engaged to examine that which he had a better opportunity to do than any one else, by reason of the nature of his charge,

whether what the soldiers had deposed concerning the disciples stealing away the body of our Saviour, were true or no.

I am obliged to confine myself to some general reflections upon this matter. I consider first the difficulty which was upon all accounts in this design of calling of the Gentiles, and the prodigious success which this call of the Gentiles met with, according to the Prophets.

To make us understand this difficulty better, we need only consider, 1. What were the prejudices of the Jews, even those who were become Christians; 2. What was the state of the world at the time of Jesus Christ. The Heathens enjoyed each their several religions for a longer time than any history could trace it: they attributed the happiness of their states and families to their gods. 3. We must observe the nature of that preaching by which the Gentiles were converted: its subject was the strangest thing in the world. If the cross of Jesus Christ had proved the scandal of the Jews, who looked upon the Messiah as the fountain of blessing, and the cross as an accursed punishment; it was looked upon no otherwise than as an heap of follies by the Greeks (who boasted themselves to be the wisest men of the world), as well as by the other Gentiles.

Yet, after all this, one sees a prodigious success, and a surprising extent of this call. Within a little time the world was filled with Christians: St. Paul writes to those that were in *Asia*, *Greece*, and *Italy;* St. Peter, to those of *Pontus;* St. John, to those who were among the Parthians. There were not wanting some in the very emperor's court, even that of Nero, who put St. Peter and St. Paul to death in the sixty-seventh year of our Lord.

One cannot attend to a success of this nature, without being extremely surprised: let us conceive of a dozen, or thereabouts, of poor beggars, a dozen of unlearned men coming out of *Judea*, who should

accuse the whole world of folly and impiety; every one opposing them, especially the Jews, who were incensed to see them go about to establish the belief of the cross in the world, as a doctrine which would explain the accomplishment of the promises of God concerning the Messiah, of those promises wherewith the Jews had filled all the *East*, and which had rendered them at this time doubly ridiculous.

When, instead of persecuting the Apostles, they hearken unto them; or even when in the midst of chains and prisons they are examined, they declare that true holiness consists in knowing Jesus Christ, even the same Jesus who was crucified in *Judea*, for whose name's sake they had been publicly scourged by order of the council of the Jews. Thus we find St. Paul boasting of his severe usage.

If persons question them more particularly about the actions of this Jesus, they answer coldly, That the Son of God came down from heaven; that he took upon him our flesh in the womb of a virgin; that when he was become man, and yet an infant, Herod sought to kill him, to avoid which he was carried into *Egypt;* that after having lived thirty years obscurely in a carpenter's shop, he was taken by the Jews, scourged, mocked, crowned with thorns, nailed to the cross, where they gave him vinegar to drink; that there he cried out, *My God, my God, Why hast thou forsaken me?* that he died, was buried, and rose again the third day, as he had promised before his death.

But what is it that this JESUS teaches to those that would follow him? His Apostles, in his name, require all men to renounce the pleasures of this life; to abhor polygamy and fornication; and, instead of revenging an affront, to turn the other cheek to him that smites us; and to leave our cloak also with him who takes our coat from us; to go two miles with him who constrains us to guide him one; to love

our enemies: and to wish well, and pray for those that despitefully use us, and persecute us.

But what rewards will he give to his servants? The Apostles answer, That he promises nothing that is considerable in this life, but an everlasting happiness in the world to come.

It is visible that nothing seems to be worse contrived to gain credit than this story. The weakness of Jesus Christ is visible; he was crucified. What ground is here to believe that he was able to perform his promises? The service he prescribes is very rough; the reward he proposes is at a great distance; and, moreover, it is such as appears very doubtful to those who are not furnished with strong impressions of the immortality of the soul, and of a life to come.

But, on the other hand, the Apostles solidly demonstrate that he is GOD, and not a mere man; that he can raise the dead, and that he can perform his promises. Though they do not say, Bring hither the blind, the lame, and the deaf, and we will heal them in his name; present your dead to us, and we will raise them in the name of that Jesus who is born of Mary, of that Jesus who died, and cried out on the cross, *My God, my God, Why hast thou forsaken me?* (for I acknowledge that this miraculous power which they had received, was only exerted upon certain occasions, which the Spirit of God made choice of); yet they did that which was equivalent: for when blind men were brought to them, they said, Ye blind, in the name of Jesus, recover your sight; and in like manner to the lepers, to possessed persons, to the sick of the palsy, to the dead. Upon this, all were converted, and the cross of Jesus Christ triumphs.

There are three sorts of people in the world, wise men, men of a middle sort, and such as are of a lower capacity; and several of these three orders of

men made profession of the Christian religion, as well amongst the Jews as Heathens.

CHAP. XVI.

That the Christian Religion is founded on Proofs of Fact, and that consequently nothing in the World is so certain as the Truth of it.

THIS reflection ought to be made more than once, because there is nothing so proper to establish the truth of the Christian religion beyond all contest, or that will confound Atheists, profane persons, and Jews, who endeavour to oppose it, more effectually.

I say then, that the chief articles on which the whole Christian religion is grounded, are confirmed proofs of fact, that is, by witnesses whose evidence cannot be questioned, without shaking all the certainty which we can have of any thing in this world, and without rejecting all the means whereby we can assure ourselves of the knowledge which we enjoy.

Many particular events which were perfectly divine, happened at the birth of John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Messiah; they were known throughout all the hill country of *Judea;* they happened to a priest, that is, a public person, and it was when he was employed in his public function in the temple; they are seconded by miracles which were known to the whole nation of the Jews; they are followed by the public ministry of John the Baptist, a man who censures all *Judea*, who openly declares himself the forerunner of the Messiah, and who hath a great number of disciples, who are distinguished from those of our Saviour, who were spread throughout all *Judea*, and who continued after the death of our Saviour; these were disciples of a man who, besides all this, doth not keep up any correspondence

with our Saviour, and who at last falls by the hand of Herod for censuring his incest and lusts.

JESUS CHRIST is born in *Bethlehem*, under Augustus; a fact of which the Roman commissioners were witnesses, and which the records of that empire preserved as long as they were in being.

That the angels testified their joy at his birth, is a fact which was confirmed by the shepherds of *Bethlehem*, long before Jesus Christ had any disciples.

That a new star conducted the wise men of the *East* to *Bethlehem*, was an illustrious fact, and of which Herod, and the priests, and great men amongst the Jews, were exactly informed; and the Apostles would have found it a very difficult matter to impose this upon them, if the thing had not been distinctly known.

That the birth of Jesus Christ, and the arrival of the wise men, affrighted Herod, was a public thing, confirmed by the murder of the infants of *Bethlehem*, and reported to Augustus, together with the death of Antipater; whereof Macrobius, a Heathen, who was qualified for the knowledge of such a story, hath preserved the memory. Neither can this fact be called in question, because Josephus makes no mention of it, since so famous a Heathen attests it. *Augustus*, saith he, *having heard that amongst the infants which Herod the king of the Jews had caused to be killed in Syria, under two years of age, he had killed his own son, said, That it was better to be Herod's hog than his son.*

That Jesus Christ was in *Egypt*, and that he returned from thence, is a fact with which the Jews to this day reproach our Saviour, as if he had learned there the secret of working miracles.

That he confounded the Doctors at twelve years of age, is a fact of which the whole nation of the Jews were informed, because it happened at one of those three solemn feasts which brought up the whole nation to *Jerusalem*.

That Jesus Christ was baptized by St. John, and that he received a most glorious testimony from him, is a fact of which all those Jews whom the ministry of St. John had drawn to the river *Jordan* were witnesses.

That Jesus Christ chose for his Apostles men without learning, and of the meanest of the people, that he lived with them three years and an half, preaching his doctrine, correcting the traditions of the Jews, working miracles, and foretelling things to come, are facts of which the whole people of the Jews were witnesses; and all the Romans that were in *Judea* were fully informed of them; yea, they were known to all the world. The Jews could not be ignorant of them, who came up to *Jerusalem* from all parts of the world, to celebrate ten solemn feasts according to the law, during the time in which these things were acting, and from thence carried the report of them into several parts of the world where they were dispersed.

It is evident also that Jesus Christ laboured to persuade men that he was the promised Messiah: this was the most considerable fact in the world to the Jews, and which had relation to the most important point of their religion, and touched them the nearest; a fact which happened at a time when all were in expectation of the Messiah, as appears by the consultation of Herod, when the Jews, who were oppressed by the Romans, did most earnestly sigh for his appearance; a fact confirmed by public oracles, and known to the whole nation, yea to the Heathens themselves, for near three hundred years.

That Jesus Christ, notwithstanding all his miracles, was crucified at the pursuit of the Jews, and by the order of Pontius Pilate, is a fact of which the whole people of the Jews were witnesses, because it happened at the feast of the passover, that is, at a solemnity where the whole nation of the Jews was assembled: it is a fact which no Heathens ever went about to

deny; they reproached the Christians with it, who are so little ashamed of it, that, according to the orders of the same Jesus, they celebrate the memorial of it in the sacrament of the eucharist.

That there was thick darkness over all the land at the crucifixion of Jesus Christ from the third hour till the sixth, that is, from nine of the clock till twelve, according to our way of computing the time, was a fact of that nature, that the whole nation of the Jews might easily have convinced the Apostles of this imposture, if it had not been as confessed a truth as the darkness in *Egypt*, before the departure of the Israelites.

That Jesus Christ was raised the third day, is a fact attested by a great number of witnesses, the memorial whereof they celebrated every eighth day, as long as they lived, by a constant law, because they considered this resurrection as the seal of those truths which Jesus Christ had taught them: it is a fact, the truth whereof they have maintained before magistrates, before the people, in all parts of the world; it is a fact which they have publicly preached up, notwithstanding all prohibitions which have been made; in short, it is a fact which they have asserted in the midst of the most cruel torments, and even until death.

That Jesus Christ sent down upon his Apostles the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, is a fact of which all *Jerusalem* was a witness fifty days after the feast of the passover, when Jesus Christ was crucified; it is as remarkable a fact as ever happened: twelve fishermen of *Galilee* maintain, in the face of the whole Jewish nation, that the same Jesus whom the whole nation had demanded to be crucified but fifty days before, and who did actually suffer upon an infamous cross, is risen from the dead, and ascended into heaven, after he had eaten and drunk with them, and had appeared several times to them after his resurrection; and that he had given them the power of

speaking all sorts of languages, and of healing all manner of diseases.

That they spoke divers languages, is a fact most notorious, the truth whereof appears from the conversion of the world, which was found to be filled with their disciples, but a few years after this was done.

That they had the power of healing all diseases as well as their Master, is a fact the truth whereof is established upon indisputable testimonies, insomuch as their successors received the same gift by the laying-on of their hands. Two hundred years after, Tertullian mentions this gift, as being at that time well known amongst Christians.

That the Apostles, after they were rejected by the Jews, preached the Gospel to the Gentiles, who also received it, is a fact of which there are so many proofs in the world, that it cannot be called in question.

That the converted Jews strongly opposed themselves against the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles pretending, as the Jews now do, that the Messiah with his gifts and graces was confined to their nation is a fact so well attested, that it cannot be called in question, if we consider the first dispute, which gave occasion to the first council of the Apostles, and to the contests of St. Paul with those of his own nation.

That since that time the Apostles and their disciples have maintained by their writings and disputes, and finally by their martyrdom, that Jesus was the Messiah; that they have constantly stood to this claim, alleging the facts which the Gospel purposes, and maintaining that the matters there related were exact accomplishments of the promises of God, and of the ancient prophecies: that all this is unquestionable, one needs only read their sermons and speeches set down by St. Luke, and their epistles; one needs only peruse the Heathen history, and the works of

those that succeeded the Apostles, who followed their footsteps in establishing the truth of the Christian religion.

That the Apostles discharged their followers from the ceremonies which Moses prescribed, obliging them only to the essentials of morality; that they annulled the law which permitted divorces without sufficient cause, and polygamy; these are things which none, who have read their writings, or those of their first Disciples, can in the least question.

Lastly, That they foretold many things, as well as their Master; that they published their predictions, which they have extended to the end of the world, and the return of Jesus from heaven to judge the world; and that they have recorded the particulars of many considerable events, observed by the Christians, which have happened from time to time; these are facts as well known, and as incontestable as any thing can be in the world, of such a nature: whole nations are witnesses of it. Differing sects, interpreters who have several opinions concerning these prophecies, the contests of the Jews, the opposition of Atheists, the cavils of Heretics, the cruelty of Tyrants, all these concur to prove clearly that the Christians received these prophecies from the Apostles, as well as the truth of them, since even these oppositions were foretold, as well as the persecutions.

Thus I have given you a view of the greatest part of the most important articles which are contained in the Christian religion; and I think that they are so solidly grounded upon proofs of fact, that I can assert with reason, that no facts in the world can be produced, so well established as these are, which are the fundamentals of our religion.

What facts are there which are attested by whole nations, as the miracles of Jesus Christ were? What facts are there about which men were so careful to inform themselves, as when a man pretends to the title of the Messiah? What thing can we suppose

that requires a stronger conviction, because of the difficulties it involves, than that of the resurrection of Jesus Christ? for those who were eye-witnesses of his crucifixion, that is, who had seen him punished by the magistrate, the horror of all his own people, and in all appearance forsaken of heaven.

To speak the truth, as there cannot be a greater instance of fanatical folly, than to attribute to twelve poor fishermen, whose Master was crucified at *Jerusalem*, by other public order, and by an effect of the hatred of the whole nation—I say, to attribute to them the design of persuading that people and the Gentiles also, that this man was raised again from the dead, that he rules in heaven, that he has bestowed upon them the miraculous gifts of speaking all sorts of languages, and healing all manner of diseases—if this Jesus had been never raised from the dead, nor had bestowed such gifts upon them, the mind of man not being capable of so great folly; so we have all the reason in the world to conclude, that since they have attested this fact, and confirmed it by all the proofs which might convince those who, though they were not prejudiced, yet were astonished at the difficulty of the things themselves, so nothing can be more certain than facts so confirmed, as we pretend that these actually were.

CHAP. XVII.

That it cannot be questioned, whether the Books of the New Testament were written by the Apostles.

BEFORE we allege those arguments which will invincibly confirm the truth of the books of the New Testament, I desire the reader to make these three or four reflections, which seem to be very important to our present design.

The first is, That we can scarcely conceive a more simple and strong way of proving a fact, than what we find in the books here mentioned. The design of the four Evangelists, for instance, is to prove that Jesus, the son of Mary, is the promised Messiah; and that, in his birth, his life, his doctrine, his death, and resurrection, we meet with all the characters which the Prophets attributed to the Messiah. How do the Evangelists execute this their design? In the most proper way imaginable to convince others, and most proportionable to their design: they simply relate the facts; and facts so clear, that if we do not question the truth of them, we cannot doubt that Jesus is the Messiah. They relate the most important of these facts, as things that happened in the face of the whole nation of the Jews, as I have shewed in the precedent chapter; they relate them as facts for the most part owned by the Jews, from which the malice of the Jews extorted other consequences: they give us an account of the judgment which the Jews made concerning the miracles that he wrought on the Sabbath-day, upon the disciples gathering the ears of corn; of the answer which the Jews made to Pilate, *We have no other king but Cæsar.*

The second is, That the Apostles, supposing a general expectation of the Messiah, when Jesus Christ appeared, shew that there was a very great knowledge of the prophecies that respected the Messiah, and a great impossibility of applying those oracles to particular facts, if the truth of those facts had not been beyond contest. Now we find very few oracles of which they did not make an application to the life and actions of our Saviour. We will suppose the Apostles to have been men of great abilities, and who had long studied the books of the Prophets, that they might tear out such small passages as they fancied might be applicable to Jesus Christ: however, it cannot be denied, that it does not appear by their writings that they had such an exact knowledge of the prophecies; whence it might follow that they judged them to be applicable to Christ, by comparing them with the facts which they relate. 2. That they had this knowledge in common with the rest of the Jews, who at this day apply the same texts to the Messiah, if they are not constrained by their clearness to wrest them some other way.

The third reflection is, That, in the relation of these facts, they give us all the marks of an extraordinary sincerity; they represent indeed whatsoever was for their Master's glory, but they do as well relate those things which seem to be shameful to his memory. They tell us of the angels that assisted at his birth, and at his death; but tell us withal, that he was tempted of the devil, and in all appearance forsaken by God at his death. They tell us, that the multitudes were resolved to take him by force, and make him their king, as acknowledging him for the Messiah; and they tell us, that the same multitude, some time after, demanded him to be crucified.

The fourth is, That they represent very naturally all the judgments of the synagogue against Jesus: they represent him as excommunicated and crucified by them; they describe the reports that were current

among the Jews; that the disciples had taken away his body out of the sepulchre; that the soldiers had deposed the same, in the forms of law, before Pilate. From all which it appears that they were faithful historians, and not at all prepossessed; and that they used no invectives against the authors of these false reports, contenting themselves to establish the truth of the matter, by specifying the places, the time, the witnesses, and other circumstances, which are proper to establish the truth of the facts they relate.

These four reflections being once supposed, I say, it is impossible to dispute the truth of these books, or to call their authority in question: to be convinced of which, one needs only consider these two things; the first is, that the Apostles are the authors of the books which pass under their names; the other is, that their faithfulness is not to be suspected by us.

The former of these is so universally received, that nothing will be certain in matters of this nature, if this be questioned.

The four Evangelists have published their writings in populous cities, where they have been constantly read every Lord's-day in Christian assemblies; as St. Justin Martyr assures us, in his apology, which was writ about the middle of the second century.

The Apostles writ their epistles to numerous churches, to whom their hand, as well as the persons by whom they sent them, were well known. Can we instance in any writing in the world that hath been preserved with the like carefulness? Let the Jews tell us what they please concerning the care and faithfulness of their ancestors to preserve the books of the Old Testament, they can allege nothing, but we can allege the same in favour of the books of the New Testament. They tell us, that Moses, under the penalty of a curse, had forbid the adding

any thing thereto; and do not we read the same threatening in the last book of the New Testament? The philosophers of each sect have nothing of this weight to allege, as an argument that the books which they ascribe to their masters are really theirs: we find only a few men in every age who made it their business to study the books of the philosophers, physicians, and lawyers; but, ever since the Apostles, there have been Christians who made it their business to peruse and preserve their writings, as considering that they are the fountains of eternal life.

One may upon this occasion take notice of two things which deserve some attention: the one is, That the design of some Heretics, as of Marcion, for instance, to corrupt the copies of the writings of the New Testament, which were found in the hand of those of his sect, is a good argument to prove that they could not be corrupted. In short, we find all the world opposed themselves against this corruption, and confuted them by the agreement of all the other copies in the world which were exempt from this corruption.

The other is, That if there are some books whose authority was doubtful for some time, by those who otherwise were accounted orthodox, yet this cannot justly prejudice the truth of the New Testament: the reason is, because this happened only to some few epistles, which were written, not to particular churches, but to whole nations. And indeed it is plain, from common sense, that when writings are sent to whole bodies (as the epistle of St. Jude) without communicating the copy to particular men, that they may with more justice be suspected, than those whose hand was known by many, and particularly by those to whom the epistles were sent.

Moreover, the account which the ancient fathers of the church give us of the uncertainties of this nature, sufficiently shew that they were very careful in examining these things; and when at any time

some particular men did not use care enough in examining these books, as it once happened in the church of *Ross*,* where a book which was falsely attributed to St. Peter was preserved, supposing it to have been his, the other churches not consenting to it, that abuse was soon remedied, the writings abolished, that there is scarce a weak remembrance left of them.

One sees that these remarks are sufficient to assure us, that the Apostles are the authors of those books which bear their names: and if this way of confirming a matter of this nature be accounted good and solid, when we speak of the books of Aristotle or Hippocrates, it must be infinitely stronger when it is applied to the writings of the Apostles.

In short, these books were written to be read by persons of the meanest capacities, by women, by children, as well as by Doctors; and they treat of matters of which the whole world hath reason to be informed. If some Jews suffered martyrdom under Antiochus, to preserve the books of the Old Testament, we have like examples, and as numerous, of those who have done as much for the preservation of the books of the New Testament. Lastly, if the Jews have looked upon those as traitors and apostates, who gave up those books to the fury of their persecutors, the Christians have testified no less aversion for those who delivered the books of the Apostles to the fury of Heathens, even to the subjecting of them to the uttermost rigour of ecclesiastical discipline, in the third century, and before.

* Euseb. lib. vi. cap. 12.

CHAP. XVIII.

That one cannot doubt of the Faithfulness of the Witness of the Apostles concerning those Facts which they relate.

NEITHER is it more difficult to establish this second truth, That the faithfulness of the Apostles cannot be reasonably questioned.

To be convinced of this, one needs only consider the character of the Apostles, the character of their writings, of their sermons, of the sufferings, and of their martyrdom, and, last of all, the character of those amongst whom they wrote these things, and preached them to their death.

As to their sermons, the Apostles were comtemporaries with Jesus Christ; they spoke of things which they had seen, and distinguished them carefully from those which had learned another way. They were honest men, simple, and without learning, very fit to bear witness in matters of fact; they were persons that preached nothing but love, and the study of truth; they protested, in the midst of their sufferings, that they could not conceal the things which they had seen and heard; they are men without covetousness or ambition; they forsake all that they possess in the world; St. Matthew leaves his house and goods, to follow Jesus Christ. Their epistles speak nothing more than instances of Christian poverty, of the loss of their goods, and of mighty instances of their charity.

These witnesses are sufficiently numerous; they preach and write in several places, and yet they agree admirably in their relations of the same facts: it appears they had such lively and distinct impressions, that they frequently make use of the very same words. The difference which is found in some part of their

books, is a manifest argument that nothing but the force of the matter made them agree in their relations.

And, indeed, how is it otherwise conceivable that four such authors as the Evangelists, should agree about so many opinions, so many miracles, so many prophecies, so many disputes, and, in a word, about so many matters of fact? Shall we say that the second took his copy from the first, the third from the second, &c.? This appears to be evidently false, by perusing of their works, and by the difference of their style.

And certainly there appears so great ingenuity in their writings, that we cannot accuse them of having had a design to deceive the world: they tell you plainly of the meanness of their condition and original: they sincerely discover their own weaknesses, their ambition, their vanity, their disputes, their heats, their murmurings. St. Matthew tells us that he was a publican, that is, a servant of the Roman power, whom the Jews looked upon as an excommunicated person, and as an enemy of their own nation: he relates the ridiculous pretension of the sons of Zebedee, founded on the carnal notion of their mother concerning the temporal kingdom of the Messiah. They set down St. Peter's denying of his Master; they do not dissemble their common ignorance, which made them expect a temporal king in Jesus Christ; they frankly publish their own incredulity, when Mary Magdalen brought them the news of our Saviour's resurrection; and they describe the obstinate resistance of St. Thomas about this matter, against the unanimous testimony of all his companions.

They do not content themselves with saying in general that some illustrious facts have happened, but they punctually set down all the circumstances; so that it clearly appears their design was to have their writings examined, and that after an exact search, men might acquiesce in the conclusions which they draw from thence. For instance, they do not tell

us that Jesus Christ raised a great many from the dead; they only tell us of three, describing the circumstances of their resurrection, the time, the place, the age, the persons, the assistants; and all these, with other particulars, which impostors care not to enter upon, lest any should contradict themselves, or be easily confuted.

I have already shewn, that the nature of the things themselves which the disciples of Jesus Christ have written, is such as will not permit us to accuse them of having had a design to impose upon the world: they are facts, and not discourses, which are left upon record; and facts relating to the most important matter in the world, than which none was ever more thoroughly examined; they are facts which are linked so closely, and which have so strict a dependance one upon the other, and so interwoven with the most public transactions, either in civil or religious affairs, that it was impossible for them to form the design of such an imposture.

In short, it is very remarkable, that these facts were publicly known to the kings of *Judea*, to the Roman magistrate, to the principal ministers of state, and of their religion, and to the whole nation of the Jews assembled ten several times at their solemn feasts; to the several sects of the Jewish religion, the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essens, who are attacked, censured, and confuted, in these books.

One ought to consider, after all, that the Apostles at first preached and wrote in *Judea*, where were the witnesses of those miracles which they related; the impotent, the blind, the deaf, which Jesus Christ had restored; the dead whom he raised, the Scribes and Pharisees whom he censured, the Sadducees whom he confuted, the auditors who had heard him preach, the towns wherein he had conversed most familiarly, the same people that followed him, the same enemies that conspired his death, the same

judges, and the same authority which condemned him to death.

St. Luke, in the relation he gives us of the speeches and apologies which the Apostles made before kings, before the great council of the Jews, and in the midst of their synagogues, brings them in speaking of the facts contained in the Gospel, as of matters publicly known and attested by a vast number of witnesses: thus St. Peter speaks of them in the tenth of the Acts; and the other sacred writers spake of them in the same manner in their epistles.

Here is a new character which we ought carefully to observe: we find no temporal interest which obliged the disciples to adhere to Jesus Christ; and we find yet less reason to suppose, if Jesus Christ had not been raised from the dead, and they had not seen him after his death, that they should have had any concern for his glory: they would certainly have condemned and anathematized him as an impostor, who by means of some false miracles, and an affected holiness, had abused them; whereas indeed we find that they demanded the glory of Jesus Christ with so much heat, and that with so constant a testimony to his resurrection, that they exposed themselves to all manner of reproaches, to all sorts of punishments, and most cruel deaths, to confirm the belief of that fact. They despise the anathemas of the Jewish synagogue, they contemn their public obloquies, they value not the hatred of their whole nation: they preach this crucified person in *Judea*, they preach him also in other countries, that he might be equally adored by Jews and Heathens: they leave their employments, to follow this Jesus; and after they had accompanied him three years, they depart from *Judea*, to go and confound the idolatry of the world, and within *Rome* itself to decry the gods they worshipped, obliging them to acknowledge him whom the men of *Jerusalem* had crucified, for their God; him, who had been the detestation of the Jews; him, whom the Roman

magistrate had given up to their fury, in making him undergo the punishment appointed for slaves.

Lastly, one ought to observe it is a thing of great weight in this whole question, that this testimony of the Apostles, which is so uniform, so solemn, so well confirmed by all manner of means, and sealed with their deaths, is not contested or contradicted by any historian of that time. There was nothing more easy either for Jews or Gentiles, than to convince the world of the falsehood of the facts related in the Gospel; they had the books of the Apostles in their hands, they were masters of the public records: it was a matter of general concernment to the Jews, to oppose themselves to an imposture of so terrible a consequence as the history of the Evangelists was, if it had been entirely false; neither was it less the interest of the Romans to expose a sect, of whom Pliny the younger tells us, that all sorts of people joined with them, though they were persecuted with incredible violence. In the mean time we find nobody that hath contradicted the relation of the Apostles, nor any author that has writ against Jesus Christ or his Apostles. A long time after indeed there was a book seen, called The Acts of Pilate, published by the order of the emperor Maximian, which endeavoured to overthrow the truth of the facts that are related in the Gospels; but those acts are contradicted by all the Heathen historians yet remaining that were contemporary with the Apostles. Finally, a vast number of Jews and Gentiles were immediately convinced by the authority of the Apostles; and a belief in the Gospel hath passed from *Judea* to the ends of the world, according to the predictions which God gave by the ministry of the Prophets, and by the mouth of our Saviour.

CHAP. XIX.

More Reason to manifest the Faithfulness of the Apostles.

WHAT I have already alleged might be sufficient to establish the faithfulness of the Apostles; but, for a fuller conviction of the reader, concerning so weighty truth of our religion, I shall superadd some few more reflections.

First of all, it cannot be denied that the form of the writings of the New Testament is vastly different from those which may be suspected as forgeries. When the four Evangelists had related the miraculous birth of John the Baptist, they next set down that of our Saviour Christ, with the actions of his life, until his death, which does not comprehend above four or five years.

St. Luke writes the history of the Apostles, and in particular that of St. Paul, and takes in only the space of about thirty years: now let any one judge whether they who confine themselves to so narrow limits in respect of time, place, and persons, have any design to impose.

The remainder of these books is composed of two sorts of writings, one epistolary, and the other prophetical: for the prophetical parts, time must prove the truth of the predictions which are contained in the Apocalypse, as well as of those which are found in some of the epistles of the Apostles.

As for the epistles, besides some moral instructions, they are almost all employed in deciding some questions which the calling of the Gentiles to the Gospel, and the abolishing of the ceremonial law, had raised in the minds of the Jews who were converted to Christianity. We know that, of all writings, epistles are

the most certain monuments, and those which men endeavour to forge least.

After all, it is certain that the sacred writers have with great care set down the time in which every event happened, as well according to the style of the Jews, in pointing out to us their solemn feasts, as that of the Gentiles, by setting down the year of the Roman emperor, and the character of the Roman magistrates.

A second character, which hinders us from accusing these books as forgeries, is this, that we cannot deny but that these books are of a very particular nature: they contain several considerable oracles which were to be fulfilled in the same generation, as that of the destruction of *Jerusalem;* they contain a continued series of miracles, of which all *Judea* was witness; they contain a great number of sermons, preached upon several illustrious occasions in the synagogues, in the temple of *Jerusalem*, and before thousands of people in the wilderness. Let any one judge whether it would be an easy thing to make these writings to be received, if we should suppose them to be lately forged.

This third reflection is also considerable: it is certain that the Gospel was preached in the greatest cities of the empire, by the Apostles, and the disciples of Jesus: the history of the Apostles, and their epistles themselves, make it evident, that there were numerous churches at *Rome*, *Corinth*, *Thessalonica*, *Philippi*, *Ephesus*, *Antioch*, and several other famous places: it is also known that there were Jewish synagogues in the same places; now if this be the case, what possibility is there of suspecting the least imposture in the books of the Apostles, if we consider how they were drawn up? The disciples of Christ did not only preach in the synagogues the same things which they have put in writing, but they also engaged the Jews to examine them, because they affirmed them with a constancy which the Jews could not but look

upon as incredible obstinacy: first of all, that these were things beyond dispute, and could not be doubted of. Secondly, That they had been long since foretold by the Prophets. Thirdly, that they were an exact accomplishment of other prophecies which had relation to the promised Messiah. Fourthly, That seeing they could not question the facts contained in the Gospel, they ought to renounce Judaism, to receive baptism, and become Christians.

It is also of great importance to observe further, as I have already done, that the books of the New Testament were penned before the overthrow of the commonwealth of the Jews. There are only some of the works of St. John, which were writ after the destruction of *Jerusalem*. I have before observed that the Divine Providence ordered it so, that all the Jews for five-and-thirty years together, repairing thrice a year to *Jerusalem* at their three solemn festivals, might have greater opportunities to inform themselves of the truth of the fact contained in the Gospels, and the Acts of the Apostles.

To this remark, I shall now add two weighty considerations: the one is, That the Christians for some years submitted themselves to the ceremonial law, and repaired with the Jews to *Jerusalem*, and by this means were engaged to examine the facts contained in the Gospel. The other is, That after the council of *Jerusalem*, they were dispensed with as to that custom, as well as the observing of all the other parts of the ceremonial law, which set the Christians in a greater opposition to the Jews, and so increased the necessity of examining very scrupulously on both sides, whatsoever was for or against them in those matters of religion.

This observation leads us naturally to another, That it is absolutely impossible that an imposture of this nature should not be discovered, when there ariseth a difference between those, who may be looked upon as the authors of the forgery, and those who

after them endeavoured to gain credit to it. Now if we find that one disciple of Jesus Christ betrays him without accusing him of the least crime or imposture; if we have seen the Christians at first united in the same assemblies with the Jews; and that there were several contests and disputes between the Apostles and those first Christians, yet without calling those facts which are contained in the Gospel, in question by either side: St. Paul takes notice of the contests which happened between him and St. Peter; St. Luke relates the heats between St. Paul and Barnabas, upon very slight occasions, he sets down also the dispute which arose about the distribution of alms to to the Greek and Jewish widows: one sees that there arose a dispute amongst the Apostles themselves, about the calling of the Gentiles to the Gospel; one sees afterwards the obstinacy of some of the Jews of the sect of the Pharisees, who maintained the absolute necessity of submitting to circumcision, and St. Paul's opposition set down in his epistle to the Galatians. We need no more to make it evident, that there could be no concert nor collusion between them, to deceive or impose upon those to whom they preached the Gospel.

Let us now go a little further; a dispute happens about a capital point of Christian religion, about the resurrection: insomuch that St. Paul thinks himself obliged to write concerning it to the Corinthians, so that there was a necessity of examining the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ again.

Now we find that St. Paul, to confirm this doctrine in general, chiefly makes use of the instance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which he proves by arguments taken from the fact itself, that is, by witnesses whom he produceth. Whereupon I make this considerable reflection, That in comparing this dispute of St. Paul with the writings of the Evangelists, it clearly appears that they did not allege all the proofs they might have done. None of them relates

in particular the number of those who saw Jesus Christ in *Galilee* upon the holy mountain; but St. Paul who had examined the faithfulness of their relations, and knew the witnesses, specifies the number, and observes that many of them were yet alive, if perhaps any of them were already dead.

I shall add only two considerations more, which prove that it was even impossible for the Apostles to impose upon the world on this occasion. The first is taken from their state and condition. They are no great lords, whose power might terrify any one from examining their writings; or whose reputation could not have been called in question without danger: on the contrary, they were men of mean condition, employed in base professions, often cast into prisons, and from time to time obliged to appear before magistrates for the same doctrine and the same facts which they published to the world. Let us consider then whether it were an easy matter for St. Paul for instance, I say for this St. Paul, a maker of tents, this St. Paul without reputation, without riches; this St. Paul who was seized at *Jerusalem* after divers persecutions, this St. Paul who was sent a prisoner to *Rome*, and imprisoned there under the power of the Roman magistrate, and who at last lost his life by Nero's order, to make those blindly believe all he said, who were at liberty to examine, whether all that Luke related as happening to him at *Jerusalem*, at *Maltha*, at *Philippi*, at *Athens*, were indeed true, or only a framed story.

The second thing we ought to observe is, That not only the books of the Apostles were publicly read every Lord's day, by a constant law, of which we have most authentic witnesses in the writings of the Apostles themselves, and in other ancient books, which are still extant; but also that they were all of them written, not in Hebrew, which at that time was a dead tongue; not in Syriac, a language spoken in very few places; but in Greek, which at that time

was the language commonly received throughout all the Roman empire; and besides was the language into which the Divine Providence had caused the Old Testament to be translated about three ages before, that men might compare the ancient oracles and their accomplishment together.

CHAP. XX.

That the whole Model of the Religion and Commonwealth of the Jews is at this day so entirely destroyed, that the Messiah could no more be known.

WHAT I have before set down to establish the truth of those facts which serve for a foundation to the Christian religion, is certainly sufficient to answer the design which I formed in writing these reflections upon the books of the holy Scripture; and I believe I may with justice conclude, That as nothing is more uncontestable than the truth of those books, and of the facts in them related; so there is nothing more certain than the truth and divinity of the Christian Religion. So that now I have only two things to do, with which I conceive it will be necessary to conclude these reflections: The one is, to shew the absolute impossibility of conceiving any other accomplishment of the ancient oracles than what is set down in the Gospel: The other is, that concerning the divisions amongst Christians, which are a scandal to the Jews, and especially concerning the difficulty of the mysteries which the Gospel proposes, which are so many stumbling-blocks to them which hinder them from discerning those characters of truth in the Gospel, which by the fulfilling of the ancient oracles, appear therein with so much lustre. The former of these

shall be the subject of this, and the latter of the next chapter.

As the pulling down of the scaffolds which were only set up to build a palace, is an infallible sign that the building is finished, so one may say, that the total defacing of the model, which God had formed in the law, that the Messiah at his coming might be certainly known, is an unswerable proof that he is already come. It is worth our pains to make some reflections on this overthrow, that we may conclude against the Jews, that if the Messiah was yet to appear in the world, it would be impossible to know him, according to the characters which God had given of him before his appearing.

In the first place therefore, whereas God had confined the Jews to the land of *Canaan*, that they might be visible to all the posterity of Noah, of whom one part, that is, the offspring of Cham, possessed *Egypt* and *Africa*; the posterity of Japhet *Europe*, and the lesser *Asia*; and those of Shem, the rest of *Asia*; the Jews at present are driven from that country; and far from being restored to it after seventy years, as they were by Cyrus, they have been for ever banished thence, by a decree of the emperor Adrian, who forbad them so much as to turn their eyes towards *Judea*, which was in the year of Christ 135. The Heathen Celsus insults over them in these remarkable words: *They have no more*, saith he, *either land or house remaining to them.*

Secondly, So far were they from having any remainders of a temporal power, that they were then wholly deprived of it. See what Tertullian saith of them in the year of our Saviour 204.* *They wander*

* *Dispersi, palabundi, & cœli & soli sui extorres, vagantur per orbem, sine homine, sine Deo rege, quibus nec advenarum jure terram patriam saltem vestigio salutare conceditur.* Apolog. cap. 21.

up and down the world like dispersed vagabonds, banished from their climate and country, without man, without God for their king, and are not permitted, as strangers, to set foot on their native soil. We read a decree of Honorius the emperor, which deprives them of the right of nominating their patriarchs, or of paying them any tribute; which shews that their authority was wholly extinct.

Thirdly, Their temple at *Jerusalem* being destroyed in the seventieth year of our Lord, as that in *Egypt*, called Onion, was the year following, it could never be built again, notwithstanding that Julian the apostate, out of his hatred to the Christians, favoured that enterprise in the year of our Saviour 363. There is a letter still extant which Julian writ to the Jews, to assure them of his protection, and to encourage them to that work, but it was not so much his death which dashed that undertaking, as a very memorable opposition from heaven.

Marcelinus, a Heathen, gives us this account of it.* *And being desirous to propagate the memory of his government by the greatness of his works, he with vast expence designed to rebuild the splendid temple which was formerly at Jerusalem, which after many and bloody battles, being besieged by Vespasian, and afterwards by Titus, was at last taken with difficulty: he committed the care of hastening the business to Alypius of Antioch, who had formerly been pro-præ-*

* *Lib.* 23. *Imperiique sui memoriam magnitudine operum gestiens propagare, ambitiosum quondam apud Hierosolymum templum quod post multa & interneciva certamina, obsidente Vespasiano, posteaque Tito, ægrè est expugnatum, instaurare sumptibus cogitabat immodicis: negotiumque maturandum Alypio dederat Antiochensi, qui olim Britannias curaverat pro præfectis. Cum itaque rei idem fortiter instaret Alypius, juvaretque provinciæ Rector, metuendi globi flammarum prope fundamenta crebris assultibus erumpentes, fecere locum exustis aliquoties operatibus inaccessum: hocque modo elemento destinatius repellente, cessavit inceptum.*

fect of Britain. As therefore this Alypus was vigorously prosecuting the work, being assisted by the lieutenant of the province, terrible balls of fire frequently breaking forth near the foundations, sometimes burnt the workmen, and made the place inaccessible: thus the design was laid aside, the elements itself beating them back on purpose. Julian easily apprehended that their religion would perish, and that it could never be restored without the temple.

In the fourth place, the observation of some of their laws was absolutely forbidden, as being contrary to those of the Roman empire. Thus they were not suffered to have many wives.

Upon this overthrow many inconveniences followed, which it will be convenient to represent at one view.

1. They no longer know those persons who at the first division of the land, by Joshua, were owners of the different parts of the land of *Canaan*.

2. Their families and tribes are confounded; their jubilee, which could not be kept but in the land of *Canaan*, and which obliged them to study their genealogies, having ceased long since.

3. The family of David is at this day utterly unknown.

4. They have no more lawful priests to observe the primogeniture, to examine the tokens of virginity, though it appears that, according to God's design, these laws were given on purpose to ascertain the knowledge of the Messiah, and to be like enclosures about this important truth, in the compass of which it might be better examined.

Certainly if the Jews were still in possession of *Judea*, if they had their kings of the tribe of Judah, if they had their priests, if they were assured of their genealogies, if they still enjoyed all the other neces-

sary means for establishing the certainty of their descents, if their temple had still subsisted in its former lustre, and that the sacrifices appointed by the laws were still offered there: the Jews might boldly answer that the Shiloh was not yet come, that is, they ought not to despair of seeing the Messiah born at *Bethlehem*, of the seed of David, and entering the temple of *Jerusalem*. Then the prophecy of Daniel, which determines 490 years for the term in which the Messiah was to appear, and be cut off by a violent death and punishment, would seem to be eluded.

But the term of the Messiah's coming is past, the commonwealth of the Jews is overturned, the temple of *Jerusalem* is destroyed 1600 years since: there are no more genealogies among the Jews; they do not know their tribes, much less their families: how then can it be supposed that God should be true in his oracles (as we must acknowledge him to be) if they were never answered by the event?

To speak the truth, it is impossible to consider the arguments we have alleged to prove that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, and especially those demonstrations which the Apostles have given us, without acknowledging these two things:

The first is, That it was very easy at the time of Jesus Christ's appearing, to examine whether he who declared himself to be the Messiah, were so indeed; so it is absolutely impossible to examine it, or know it since the destruction of that model, if we suppose that God at first framed it for the determining of this question, as we have no reason to doubt it.

The second is, That the Christians exactly followed this Divine model, and being convinced of the truth of the facts which exactly corresponded with it; and which answered it in all its parts, they had all the reason imaginable to believe that Jesus Christ was the Messiah.

In short, if we consider it well, we shall find that the whole Christian religion is nothing but a question of fact between the Jews and Christians: but such a question as the Jews at present are not in a condition to maintain against the Christians.

Both Jews and Christians agree in the characters of the Messiah, or at least about the most of them. According to these characters the Messiah ought to be come: the Christians maintain that they may be found in Jesus Christ, and they prove it by matter of fact; wherefore we must conclude, That either these characters attributed to the Messiah, are not proper characters to know him by, and so the wisdom of God will be eluded, and both Jews and Christians equally deceived, in taking that for a character of the Messiah which is not; or else that both the Messiah is certainly come, and that he is no other than that Jesus whom we worship.

CHAP. XXI.

That the Greatness of the Mysteries of the Christian Religion, and the Division which is amongst Christians, cannot be any Prejudice to the Proofs of the Truth of the Christian Religion.

I COME now to examine the double stumbling-block which the Jews pretend against the Christian religion. *This Religion*, say they, *propounds doctrines that are inconceivable, and contrary to reason: for instance, that of the Trinity, that of the Incarnation and the Divinity of the Messiah.* These are the doctrines which the Jews reject, as absolutely incompatible with the books of the Old Testament, which we have received from their hands.

But it is an easy matter to answer this objection. 1. It is founded upon a total forgetfulness of the

solidity of those proofs of fact, which I have alleged. Jesus Christ is risen from the dead; this is a fact confirmed by several witnesses. It appears from Tacitus, that Jesus Christ suffered death under Tiberius, Pontius Pilate being governor of *Judea*. It is known that Claudius banished the Christians from *Rome*, in the year of our Lord 54. It is evident from Tacitus, in his life of Nero, that he accused the Christians of burning the city of *Rome*, which himself was the author of; the Christians therefore made a considerable body in the capital city of the empire, and this happened in the year of our Lord 64. Suetonius says the same thing. 2. It appears that Pliny, in Trajan's time, takes notice of the manner of their meetings. 3. Dion Cassius sets down the accusation brought in against Flavius and Domitilla, as against Atheists; which is the title Julian the apostate gives to Constantine, because the Christians rejected the worship of the Heathen gods. 4. It appears by the latter end of the Acts of the Apostles, that this book was writ in the year of our Lord 63; and yet this book supposes the Gospel of St. Luke to have been written before it; and St. Luke's Gospel takesit for granted, that some of the other Gospels were already published. 5. It appears from the writings of Clemens Romanus, that the Epistle to the Hebrews was then written; and the same may be gathered from the books of St. Ignatius, Polycarp, and St. Justin. These facts, which are certain, are sufficient to prove that immediately after the death of Jesus Christ, his Apostles, and their disciples, as eye-witnesses, maintained the truth of his resurrection. After this it may indeed be disputed, by what power he was raised, whether by a Divine power, or by his own; but it is ridiculous to dispute the fact by reasonings drawn from pretended absurdities which one may think to find in the doctrines of the Gospel.

Secondly, These mysteries, as for instance, that of

the Trinity, relates to the Divine nature, which is incomprehensible, so that it is no strange thing if an idea of it be proposed to us, which not being distinctly known by us, may raise difficulties and perplexities in our minds. If I would discourse with one born blind, of the sun, of its light and heat, and should attribute to the sun the production of light, and afterwards of heat, he would find an infinite trouble not to imagine three suns. It is known how the philosophers, who agreed about the unity of the soul, have notwithstanding been obliged to attribute several faculties to it, which the common people look upon as very different things, and which seem to oppose the ideas of its unity and simplicity.

In the third place, The Christians prove very solidly, that these mysteries, have been clearly proposed by the Apostles, who received their light from heaven as to these truths, and so might necessarily be believed upon their word, for the same reason that the Prophets of the Old Testament were formerly believed.

Moreover, they assert that these doctrines were first expressed, though not so clearly, in the Old Testament, which is in the hands of the Jews, the mortal enemies of Christians.

I add to these remarks, that most of those facts whose truth is so invincibly established, suppose these doctrines; and that the whole frame of the religion doth so necessarily require them, that we rob it of a considerable part of its glory in questioning or contesting any of them.

These reflections may suffice in general to resolve this difficulty of the Jews; and, for a more particular satisfaction, we refer the reader to those books which purposely treat of these mysteries, desiring him to observe carefully, that commonly the most difficult objections of Heretics against these matters, do rather oppose the terms which are made use of, or the notions which men follow in speaking of these truths,

than the propositions contained in the writings of the New Testament.

At least one may be assured, that the Jews are constrained to resolve several parallel objections, to which one can scarcely give a satisfactory answer, without borrowing some distinctions and notions from the Christians.

Neither can the second objection of the Jews give any more disturbance. It is true that there have been divisions amongst Christians, and are still to this day. What can we conclude thence? Can we reasonably conclude that therefore the first founders of Christianity were doubtful concerning the truth of those facts which are the support and foundation of it.

On the contrary, upon an attentive observation one may find,

1. That heresies have only served to render the truth of these facts more incontestable, by obliging those that had considered of them, to examine their certainty with more care and application. This is the judgment one ought to make upon all those heresies in the second age, about the truth of the flesh of Jesus Christ, or about the truth of his death: from thence men took occasion to take notice of, and collect with great care, all the circumstances that prove the truth of both these facts.

2. We find that the greatest part of these contests do not concern the truth of the facts, but the several consequences drawn from them, the truth of those matters continuing still beyond dispute. This we find in the dispute raised about the millennium, the truth of the promises of Jesus Christ being equally believed by both the disputing parties; but differently understood, according to the temper of those that considered of them; some forming gross and sensual conceptions concerning them; others having a more spiritual relish, which they had acquired by studying the prophecies, and their true sense.

3. We find that this division which had sprung up amongst Christians, is one of the most solid proofs of the truth of the books of the New Testament. If some fools have endeavoured to decry some of them, or to falsify some particular places, we see that both parties unite to repel that violence, by producing their copies, and beating back the impostors with their united strength. One sees that Tertullian, though a Montanist, writ prescriptions against Heretics; and Epiphanius takes notice (without any respect to some that were orthodox) of their crime in blotting out of their copies, that Christ had wept.

It is known that the division of the Jews into Karaites and Thalmudists, the jealousy between the Jews and Samaritans, and the division between the Jews and Christians, is a means of preserving the Scripture, and hindering its corruption, each party being very vigilant to hinder their adversaries from attempting any thing to its prejudice, in corrupting a book which they consider as common to them all.

I might observe many other advantages which accrue to the truth from these human failings; but I will only instance in one, which has always seemed to me very considerable; and that is, That these Heretics distinctly prove the truth of the predictions of our Saviour. An impious person would have reason to accuse our oracles as false, if there had never been any heresies. But truth triumphs in seeing so great a multitude of them, who the more they increase, the more she sees herself confirmed and established. This is the reason induced God to permit so great an increase in the first ages, when the truth, meeting with the greatest opposition by persecutions, stood in the greatest need of sensible characters by which it might be known.

I conclude this work with desiring my reader to consider these Reflections upon the holy Scripture here propounded, with a serious attention, and to examine

the coherence and indissoluble connexion of them; and with prayer to God that it may please him to make them serviceable to advance the glory of his name, which is the only end I have proposed to myself in the writing of them.

FINIS.

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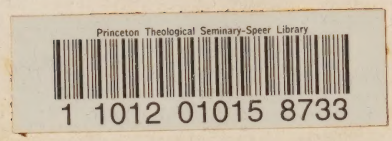
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